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THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN HOWE, M. A.

WITH

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE,

BY EDMUND CALAMY, D. D.

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THE VANITY OF A

FORMAL PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

CONSIDERED

IN EIGHT SERMONS

ON TITUS I. 16.

SERMON I.*

THEY PROFESS THAT THEY KNOW GOD; BUT IN WORKS THEY DENY HIM, BEING ABOMINABLE, AND DISOBEDIENT, AND UNTO EVERY GOOD WORK REPROBATE. TITUS i. 16.

Since it is too obvious, that many persons are apt to satisfy themselves with the mere profession of Christianity; and to reckon that while they explicitly own the true religion they are sound Christians and good protestants, without considering whether that religion carries due and suitable impressions on their hearts or not; I have therefore thought it might not be unuseful, to discourse a little from this Scripture, and show the vanity and insignificance of an empty profession, a profession which refutes and contradicts itself. To make way for what I intend from this passage of Scripture, there are a few things that it will be necessary for me to recommend to your notice.

First, That this phrase, the knowing of God, is a usual expression to signify religion in general; inasmuch as it is the primary, the most deep and fundamental, thing in all religion. It is, as I remember the moralist styles it, "The foundation of foundations." Hence, from so noted and principal a part, the denomination is put upon the whole. To know God, therefore, is to own him, to acknowledge him as our God; and thereupon to carry ourselves suitably towards him. In the first commandment, which establishes the relation betwixt God and us, it is intimated, that if we will have him to be our God, we must have no other gods before him, Exod. xx. 3. And again, one of the prophets expresses it by knowing no other *god* but *Him*. "I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know no other god but me, for there is no saviour beside me," Hos. xiii. 4. The import then of the expression, is to own him as *God*, in relation to ourselves; and consequently to love and fear him, to hope and delight in him, and the like. All which result from the relation betwixt him and us; according to that well known observation and rule among the Hebrews; that "words of knowledge import life and sense, as consequent; as words of life and sense suppose knowledge antecedent."

Secondly, This phrase imports not only natural religion, but also that which is revealed. Knowing God therefore is not to be taken so abstractedly, as though it meant no more than only to entertain the notion of the Deity, and the practice of those duties that we are led to by the light of nature; but more generally whatever duty he is pleased to enjoin also by revelation. We then know and acknowledge him as *God*, with respect to his sovereignty and dominion, when we are universally observant of his will; how or by what means soever it is made known to us; whether it be by natural light, or express superadded revelation. And therefore we find this expression made use of to signify religion among the Jews, while they were a peculiar people unto God. It is said, Hezekiah, a good king, "spoke comfortably to the Levites," *to their hearts*, according to the Hebrew, "who taught the good knowledge of the Lord," 2 Chron. xxx. 22. That is, instructed the people in religion, according to the revelation of the mind and will of God, which was then afforded them.

Thirdly, We find this phrase expressly used to signify the Christian religion in particular. And thus the same apostle uses it in another place. "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame," 1 Cor. xv. 34. As if he had said, "You do not know God, you do not demean and behave yourselves like those, who understand the principles of your own religion." And again, says the apostle, "After you have known God, why turn ye back to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye again desire to be in bondage?" Gal. iv. 9. That is, Why do you follow the gnostics in mixing judaical and pagan rites with the religion of Christ.

Fourthly, We are therefore farther to collect, that the apostle does here, in this place, particularly intend the Christian religion. "They profess that they know God;" that is, they profess to be Christians. For it is very evident he writes of such, as professed the only true religion. The teachers who seduced and corrupted them, it is evident, were professed Christians, though very corrupt and unsound ones; for they endeavoured to deprave others; not indeed as avowed adversaries to the Christian name, but as deceivers and gainsayers. It is true, the apostle said, they ought to be convinced; by which he implies that there were some common agreed principles among them, which might be the ground of such conviction. He calls them deceivers, who by cunning insinuations laboured to pervert the Christian doctrine, and to render it favourable to licentious and immoral practices. And therefore those, whom they had perverted, must be of the same stamp; not wholly of the Jewish religion, for that their teachers were not; but judaizing Christians. They who lived so remote from Judea, cannot be thought to have entertained the principles of the Jewish religion entirely; nor so generally, and in such numbers, as is here implied, for "many whole houses were subverted," Tit. i. 11. Much

* This Sermon is without date; but it is very probable it was preached on January 16, 1699.

less can we suppose the whole body of the people to be naturally Jews; for the apostle does manifestly describe them by the common national taint of that island, that is, as "liars, evil beasts, slow bellies," (Tit. i. 12.) according to the character given of them by one of their own poets.[a] Thus are the people described, whom the apostle speaks of, namely, the natives of Crete, who were converted from paganism to the profession of the Christian religion, with which they mingled many of the Judaical sentiments. This therefore being premised, our way is plain and clear to the things I intend to insist upon; which are especially these two—That men may profess the true religion, and yet lead very ill lives; and—That they who do so, by just interpretation, may be said to deny the religion they profess.—I propose to speak to these two observations jointly in this order.

I. I shall show what sort of profession that must be, which can be meant in such a case.

II. What the persons who make it may be notwithstanding, in the temper of their spirits, and the course of their practice.

III. I shall show whence it is, that men should make profession of a religion, to which the temper of their spirits and the course of their walking are so repugnant. And,

IV. The vanity of such a profession, and how little it signifies to entitle persons to the reputation or proper rewards of such a religion.

I. I shall show what sort of profession that must be, which can be meant in this case, or was made by such persons as the apostle speaks of.

1. It must be understood to be, in the main, but a nominal profession. These professors indeed own the Christian name, call themselves by it; and not only do so, but also claim the privilege of being called Christians by others: like those who said they were Jews, when they were not, but were of the synagogue of Satan, Rev. ii. 9. And St. Paul, in the second chapter of his epistle to the Romans, speaking of these professors, uses the very same style, alluding to those who called themselves Jews, or were commonly so called by others: "Thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God," &c. but says he, in the close of that chapter, "He is not a Jew that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, that is one inwardly—whose praise is not of men but of God," Rom. ii. 17, 29.

2. This profession could be only formal; that is, wholly made up of the external form of that religion to which they pretended. So, in like manner, many now profess the Christian religion, and make a show or appearance of being religious by frequenting Christian assemblies; by owning themselves to be members of the catholic, or some protestant church; and by wearing the badge and cognizance of such and such a party. The bare having a name, is all we can suppose to be in such a profession as this. And therefore to these professors may be applied what our Lord says to the church in Sardis; "Thou hast a name that thou art alive, when thou art dead," Rev. iii. 1. And so it is, in like manner, with all others; who content themselves with making a show of religion, and performing such external rites, as are the distinguishing badge of the several parties of the Christian world.

II. I am now to show you, what such persons may be, notwithstanding their profession, both in temper and practice; which shall be done briefly by opening the terms of the text. They may be, for all that, abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate; that is, in one word, inclined to all evil, and averse to all good. To these two things do these several expressions amount.

1. They are said to be βδελυκτοὶ, *abominable*, or shamefully addicted to all manner of evil. The word, in the original, denotes the heinousness of those practices, in which they allow themselves; and is derived from a word that signifies to send forth an offensive smell. For all sentiments of right and good, are not so totally lost and obliterated among mankind, but that there are some things which even pagans would detest.

2. They are said to be also ἀπειθεῖς, *disobedient*, which expression imports perseverance and obstinacy in an evil course. They will by no means, by no importunity, no arguments whatever, be dissuaded from practices so unjustifiable, and detestable in their own nature. They are resolved to run on whatever it costs them; to continue in sin, and in the profession of religion at the same time, which is the greatest absurdity imaginable.

3. They are said, lastly, to be πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἀδόκιμοι, *reprobate to every good work*; which signifies a disinclination to every thing that is good, to every thing that is worthy of praise. The word may be taken, as it is observed, either actively or passively, and so may signify not only to be disapproved by others, but to disapprove themselves; in which latter sense we must, at present, principally understand the phrase. They disapprove all that which claims their approbation and esteem; and are disaffected to all that good which the religion they profess would oblige them to the practice of. The expression therefore does not so much signify their omission of what is good, as their disinclination to it; but it further denotes that if they do any thing at all in religion, it is what they neither delight in, nor can endure. "Every good work" is an expression of such latitude, that it may comprehend all the works of piety, mercy, and common justice. And so it is fit we should understand it in this place. Whatever they do of this kind, their hearts are averse to it, and they bear a disaffected mind to it all. And such as are here described, persons may be found to be, notwithstanding their profession.

III. We are next to consider, whence it is, or what inducements men have to make profession of a religion, which they are resolved to contradict in the course of their lives and conversations. And many things may be considered as inducements or reasons in this case, which concur partly in all those who are mere professors; though some are of greater force than others to particular persons, whom we shall distinguish from the generality of men of this character.

1. One reason why such men join a profession of religion to a vicious life, is their unapprehensiveness and irreverence of an invisible Lord and Judge; whom because they do not see, they stand in no awe of. Therefore it is that they are not ashamed of that incongruous and inconsistent behaviour towards him, of which they would be ashamed in their deportment towards men. The following expression of the apostle gives us a great deal of light to this purpose, "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen; how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" 1 John iv. 20. Wherein is implied a greater difficulty of loving God, than a Christian brother; on this account, because God is not seen. Man continually falls under our sight and view, we converse with him daily in a way that is obvious to our natural sight, while God is invisible. And as it is in the point of love, so is it in all other natural affections; for as men with greater difficulty admit the impressions of Divine love into their hearts, than those of a visible object, so they do of Divine fear; and for this reason, I say, because God is not seen. Men would be ashamed continually to profess to one another, what they contradict in practice. Who would not be ashamed to declare himself perpetually such a one's friend; and yet, in the mean time, take all opportunities to do him all the mischief he can? But as to their carriage to an unseen God, men are not ashamed of such an incongruity as this.

2. This inconsistent conduct proceeds from the power and malignity of sinful inclinations; more especially in things that relate to and terminate on God. Sin has filled the world with enmity, which, it is true, works in men one against another: but more directly, and with greater virulence, against the blessed God himself; insomuch that they care not what dishonours they throw on his sacred name, nor what affronts they offer to his high authority and righteous laws. And though it must be acknowledged, the working of this enmity is great among men towards one another; yet, it is manifest, it is in general much greater towards the Almighty: for were it as common a thing to stab a man, as it is to wound the name of God and to affront his government, the world had been at an end long before this.

3. It is natural for men to have somewhat of religion,

a Epimenides.

while a disaffection still remains against that which is true: whence it is that they resist, and overthrow the profession they make by a most repugnant practice. It is manifest, as to the former, that all must be of some religion or other; and so they come to profess, as external circumstances lead them. It has been noted by heathens, that no society of men can live without religion. Divers have taken notice of it. It is a common passage of Cicero; "There is no nation so barbarous as to be without religion."[b] It seems as if none such had fallen within the compass of his observation. Maximus Tyrius also tells us, that "For a man to be without any religion at all, were as monstrous and unnatural, as for an ox to be without horns, or a bird to be without wings."[c] And so Plutarch in like manner observes, that "Though there be many towns and cities without coin, without government, as it happens sometimes; yet," says he, "I never heard or read, in my life, of a city without a temple. And I believe it is as impossible, that there should be a society of men without religion, as to build a city without foundations."[d]

Hence many persons, both ancient and modern, have thought religion to be the specific difference of man, and not reason; because there are so many apparent specimens of this in beasts, that in some instances it is hard to distinguish by this only between the brutal and human nature: whereas religion is peculiar to man, wherein no other sort of creatures do participate. For it is very plain that man, by his self-reflecting power, discerns himself to be a depending creature; which necessarily prompts him to pay homage to some superior being, on whom he thinks himself dependent. And therefore, if many of the pagans have worshipped for deities, those creatures which they thought most useful to them; it was not that they supposed them to be deities in reality, but because they looked upon them as representing the Deity, in those respects, wherein it was most beneficial to them.

But now, while men are naturally addicted to profess some religion, as it comes in their way, that which they have the best opportunity to know; so at the same time they have, generally, a most rooted disaffection to sincere religion, such as should command their hearts, and govern their lives and practice. This is to be resolved in some measure into the justice and sovereignty of God. Into his justice, in not continuing to give that grace which men resist and contend against: and though it is of infinite mercy that his grace does overcome in some instances, yet that it does not in all, is to be attributed to his sovereign dominion: in which he is not to be prescribed unto, as to his dispensations to his creatures, who have made themselves obnoxious to his displeasure. He is just, where he withholds any benefit; he is sovereignly gracious where he gives that assistance and power, which shall prevail against this enmity in the hearts of men. And when persons must have something of religion, and will have only that of it which is most tolerable, and does not bear hard upon corrupt nature; no wonder then, I say, if they take up with the bare name, and content themselves with the mere form of godliness. But to profess at such a rate is the most easy thing in the world.

4. This may in some cases proceed, particularly in the Christian world, from an inward conviction of the importance and excellence of religion, arising from the light of Scripture, joined with the inefficacy of it. Very plain it is, that the light by which the truth of the Christian religion is discovered to any one, carries mighty conviction of its excellence along with it. It does so to any one who views the weight and importance of the Christian religion, and considers also the evidences of it which are superadded. A religion that came with triumphant evidence and glory into the world! spoken at first by the Son of God, and confirmed by them who heard him; God bearing them witness by signs and wonders of the Holy Ghost, Heb. ii. 3, 4. Some do consider these things, and thereupon the light is so convincing, that they cannot withstand it, nor avoid receiving this religion as divine; but then, alas! it is too faint and impotent to govern their hearts and lives. It is, powerful enough to convince their judgments and consciences; but too weak to change their minds, and influence their actions. Hence it is that there is in many a profession of the true religion, with a repugnant, inconsistent practice.

5. With some others, a profession of religion may proceed from mere sinister designs. They make a profession of religion, because it suits with their interests and private views; and serves to raise and establish their reputation, and by consequence to increase their gain. They could not do so well without it in such a country, and among such a people; so that gain and godliness with them are commensurate to each other. Therefore, since a profession alone serves their turn, and answers their purpose, what need is there of any more? What need has any man of more than will answer his end? "I will have no more to do with religion, but to serve my secular interest," will such a one say, if he speaks his own sense: "I design not to be saved by religion; but to live creditably in the world, and to suit my designs with those with whom I live." Again,

6. With others it may proceed from a regard to their ancestors, from whom a religion has been transmitted to them. This is a thing that has descended from father to son; "I must therefore be of the religion of my fathers." This shows the reason why a religion so received, be it ever so good, should be so ineffectual; and have so little command of the hearts and lives of men: for its efficacy, and the grounds for receiving it, do as it were measure one another. The apostle Paul, speaking of the manner in which the Christian religion was received by the Thessalonians, says, They received it not as the word of man, but of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13. Hence it appears plain, that where the religion of Jesus as coming from God is embraced on the authority of the Divine word, and where men have their souls overawed by this apprehension, there it works effectually; but on the contrary, where it is received without grounds, there it becomes ineffectual. Many are Christians on the same grounds, and for the same reasons, that others are pagans, Mahometans, or any thing else. And were they to give a true account of their faith, it would be this; "The religion that my forefathers were of, must be mine also." This is an argument, which, *mutatis mutandis*, serves as well to make the Mahometan religion true, as the Christian. And if it is so professed, without grounds or reasons, it is no wonder if it be without efficacy on men's lives and practice.

7. With others a profession of religion is taken up as a novelty. A veneration for antiquity has a great influence on some; while others are as fond of novelty. This was the case, it is likely, of many of those unsound Christians, whom the apostle speaks of in this epistle to Titus Christianity at this time could be but newly planted in Crete, it could be only in its infancy; and therefore many embraced it as a new thing, and were pleased with it on this account. Thus we may see, men of different tempers are swayed to the same end by contrary inducements. And we may add in the last place,

8. That nothing but custom can make the profession of religion to appear tolerable, where it is attended with a repugnant and contradictory practice. Were there but few instances of this kind, a man would not have the boldness to venture on an open course of wickedness, repugnant to the religion commonly professed where he lives, whilst he continued to make a profession of it himself. But it is very obvious to common experience, that many do emulate one another in that, which is most indecorous and unbecoming, even in that which is contrary to the common reason of all. How many gainful sorts of wickedness have ceased to be shameful now-a-days from their being common! For when the restraint of shame is taken off from the mind, it is a most easy thing then for a man to be wicked. Thus influenced by custom they justify one another in what their own sedate thoughts would condemn, if they would but allow themselves to think. And hence it is that men are able to reconcile two of the most inconsistent things in the world; a profession of the most pure religion with the most impure conversation.

I should have proceeded to the fourth general head of

b Tusc. Disput. Lib. 1.
c Max. Tyr. Dissert. 17. Sect. 5.
d Plut. adversus Colotem. See this point handled at large by the Author in his Living Temple, part 1. chap. 2.

discourse, but shall conclude with one dreadful and tremendous reflection. What apparent danger are we in, of losing that religion from among us, which is more generally professed at this day! principally because of the resistance and opposition which is made against it, by the practices of those who profess it. For pray do but consider—What does God send his Gospel among a people for? Does he aim at any end in this, or does he not? And can that be a wise, intelligent agent, who aims at no end? Or can we suppose him to act wisely who aims at no proportionable and suitable end? What then can we think the great God designed as his end, in sending the Gospel into the world; in planting it in this, or any other nation? There are certainly fruits that he expects to receive; and therefore we find how express the threatenings are, when these fruits are withheld. Nothing less is threatened than the taking of the kingdom of God from them, and the giving it to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, Matt. xxi. 43. Oh the little correspondency of the hearts and spirits of men to the design of the Gospel! And what a tremendous and melancholy prospect does this afford us!

I should not be so afraid of comets and blazing stars,[e] nor of all the malice and subtlety of earth and hell combined together; I should never be afraid of these things, I say, even though the subtlety of our enemies was a thousand times greater than it is, if I could but see such a love of the Gospel, joined to the enjoyment of it, as to form the heart and influence the practice. But when I find it is God's way, and express threatening, that where the truth is not loved, there to give them up to strong delusions even to believe a lie, that they might be damned, who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness, (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12.) then, I confess, I fear, I tremble.

I know not why we should think ourselves exempt from a danger of this kind, when we consider how generally ineffectual the Gospel is among us. Alas! why should we expect God to be indulgent towards us, in this respect, above all mankind? What have we the Gospel for, if we never intend our spirits should be formed by it? If we have no design it should govern our lives, have not we of this nation reason to fear, inasmuch as we do not conform our practice to our religion, that we shall be suffered to conform our religion to our practice? We know there is a religion, too near at hand, that will allow and square well enough with the most vicious practice imaginable. Live as loosely as you will, and confess your sins to a priest, and his absolution solves all. Surely we have reason to fear lest our acting contradictory to the end and design of our religion should even lead us to embrace that sottish one of the church of Rome.

SERMON II.*

In our last discourse we considered the various reasons and inducements, that lead many persons to make a profession of religion, even while they are contradicting it in their lives and practice. To which one more might have been added; and that is, they have a foolish thought that by the good they profess, they shall some way or other expiate the badness of their conduct. Such a hope as this, as fond as it is, too apparently obtains with a great part of the world. And this I mention, not only as a thing too evident, and considerable in itself, but as it most fitly leads to what I intend in this discourse: which is,

IV. To show the vanity of such a profession, and by consequence the fondness and folly of such a hope as is here spoken of. And in treating on this subject I shall show, that such a profession in persons of so immoral a character, signifies nothing either to procure them the reputation or the rewards of the religion that they profess, or unto which they pretend; I would be understood to say, that it is of no avail to entitle them to the reputation of it amongst men, nor to any reward of it from God. These two things we shall distinctly consider.

1. Such a blasted, self-confuted profession as this, of which we are speaking, is of no significancy for securing the reputation of being religious amongst men. If it were indeed so far available as to secure them such a reputation, or to procure them that esteem from men, which is due to those who are in reality what they profess themselves to be, that would be but a poor thing, and very little to their service. It is a small thing, says the apostle St. Paul, to be judged by man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3. All must finally stand or fall by the judgment of a superior Judge, whose judgment will control and reverse all false judgments passed before. Every man must then give an account of himself to God. He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, whose praise is not of men, but of God, Rom. ii. 28, 29. If one could never so effectually recommend oneself to man, it is "not he who commendeth himself that is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth," 2 Cor. x. 18. And therefore I should not think this much worth insisting on, but only with design to lay the ground of an argument from the less to the greater; that if such a profession of religion cannot do that which is less, to wit, entitle one to the reputation of it amongst men; much less can it do that which is greater, that is, procure the rewards which God has promised to the constant and sincere.

We must understand here, that by such evil practices, as can be supposed to overthrow a profession, and annul the significance of it, cannot be meant such things as are reasonable to be imputed to the infirmities which are incident to the best, and consistent with the most perfect human character: but it must be understood of open hostilities against Christ and his religion; for doubtless the words abominable, and disobedient or unpersuadable, as the word ἀπειθεῖς signifies, amount to so much. By the former is to be understood, the heinousness and grossness of their wickedness; and by the latter, their obstinacy in an evil course. It is true, though the last expression the apostle makes use of in describing the persons whom he censures as reprobate to every good work, denotes an evil habit of mind, not always falling under human cognizance and censure; yet there is enough in the two former, besides the symptoms there may be of the latter, to show what the men really are. A profession therefore I say, in men of such a character, can signify nothing, even to this lower purpose, that is, to entitle them to the reputation of religion amongst men. And this will appear from being viewed in several lights.

1. Such a contradicted profession is not wont to do so in other cases. No man can take him to be a friend, who calls himself one against a continued series of actions, which manifestly imports habitual hatred, enmity, and malice. No one will call him a good subject, whatever he pretends, who is at present in open hostility against his prince.

2. Such a profession in other cases not only gives no reputation amongst men, but brings a disgrace, and casts a reproach upon the person making pretences. When a man's actions are continued, palpable and manifest against his profession, as in this case, it brings, I say, a reproach upon him for pretending to it. And it is so far from being to his reputation, that he draws upon himself the suspicion of being either false, or foolish: of being false, that he would design to deceive; of being foolish, that he could hope to succeed in such a case, or, indeed, of both these together.

3. A mere profession among men, in every common case, is so far from securing reputation to him who makes it, that it even sinks the reputation of the man that credits it. A very judicious person this to be so easily imposed upon! Therefore he who attempts in such a way to impose upon another, either he, upon whom he makes the attempt, will but regard him as a fool; or will be so accounted himself, because it is supposing him to be one who is capable of being so imposed upon. Which is no less

e N. B. The author here alludes to the famous comet which appeared in December, 1680; and perhaps at the very time when this Sermon was preached.

* Preached January 28, 1690.

than an attempt to blast the reputation of him, whom he endeavours to deceive.

4. A series or course of actions is always to be taken as more significant and expressive of the habitual sense and temper of a person's mind, than words can be thought to be. Words only speak a man's present sense of things, but a continued course of action shows his habitual sense of them; and is therefore the far greater and more considerable thing on all accounts.

If I am to form a judgment of another man, it is of more importance to know what the bent of his mind is now, than to know what it was, at this or that particular time. It is manifest that a series of actions is more significant and expressive; whether you compare words and actions together with relation to the same thing, or apply them severally to contrary things.

If you apply words and actions to one and the same thing, let it be for instance to kindness and good-will: suppose then you have for your object a very indigent and distressed person, one exposed to cold and pinched with hunger; let one say to him in this case, "Come, be filled, be warmed;" pray what would that signify in comparison of giving him the things which are needful for the body, Jam. ii. 16. as the apostle speaks in the same case. Which is the most significant expression, such fair words, or such effectual actions?

Again; Let words and actions be applied together to the same thing, and to signify ill-will. An unkind word may signify but a sudden passion, and no one will infer habitual hatred from an angry word; but a course of actions may import not only unkindness, but a malicious temper of mind.

Then if we apply these two ways of expressing a man's mind, that is, words and actions, to contraries, the one to signify kindness, the other unkindness; if it be manifest that words are less significant and actions more, surely then that which has less significance in it, is never to be believed against that which has greater. Again,

5. No man's words are to be believed against his works. If a man should say and unsay the same things, it may be a hundred times in a day, would you give any credit at all to his words? It is impossible you should. For in any case where I am to exercise human faith, if there be much to be said for and against the thing, I must believe, according to the greatest evidence, and cannot do otherwise; I necessarily must take that side in my belief on which the stronger probability lies. But in this case what shall I do? I can here take neither side: for how can a thing be greater or better than itself? I have therefore nothing to do here. I can exercise no faith; for I am not to believe a man's word against his word; when there is equal evidence on the one hand and the other. I am much less to believe his word against his actions, for that would be believing according to the less evidence. And further,

6. If a profession were to prevail amongst men, against a series of actions, it would take away the ground and foundations of all public human judgments. For suppose a man arraigned of murder, the business to be inquired into is, what evidence there is of malice prepense. This is the matter to be tried. For the bare taking away the life of a man, is not the crime to be punished. But the thing to be inquired into is, what evidence there is, or what inducements to believe, that the thing was designed or purposely done. If against plain facts, and apparent circumstances, to the contrary a man's word should be believed, there could then be no such thing as a human judicature in the world.

7. Actions cannot be opposed to a mere verbal or a scenical profession, with greater absurdity, in any case whatsoever, than in the matter of religion. You can suppose no case wherein actions can be opposed to actions, and words or a profession to a course of actions, with greater absurdity than in this present case. If we were to think of things manifestly absurd, we could advance nothing that is more so. Suppose, for instance, a person upon a journey should pretend to be in his right road, and he is told he is going a quite contrary way, and one should follow him, from day to day, and still see him going wrong, though he still says he is on his journey and is going right; what can be more absurd? Now let us use our understanding, and consider whether there be not as ridiculous an absurdity in pre ending to religion, against a series of actions which have a contrary tendency. Do we not all know that religion, in the common notion of it, has a tendency to blessedness; even to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever in glory, as the end? Can there be a greater contrariety supposed in any one thing to another, than there is in a course of wickedness to the glorifying and enjoying God? Or can any man think, without as palpable absurdity as is possible in any case, that whoredom, drunkenness, and debaucheries of all sorts, are means and instruments for the glorifying God, and saving a man's own soul? To say, I am a Christian, is to say, I am going to God, to glorify, to enjoy him for ever. But you can suppose no case wherein contrary actions can be opposed to a profession, with more absurdity than in this.

6. We are expressly forbidden, in the Holy Scriptures, to treat and behave ourselves towards Christians that are only so in name and profession, in the same manner as we are obliged to act towards those that are sincere. We are even directed to turn away from those who have a form of godliness but deny the power of it, 2 Tim. iii. 5. When persons are unpersuadable and obstinate in an evil way and vicious course, and will not hear the church, they are to be counted as heathens and publicans, (Matt. xviii. 17.) and are not to enjoy the reputation of Christians, even amongst men, according to the law and judgment of Christ himself in this very matter.

9. And lastly; The common profession of religion, in which they seem to bear a part, suffers by their inconsistent conduct and behaviour; and it is very unreasonable, therefore, they should gain by it. They would gain honour from the profession of Christianity, and yet bring a reproach and scandal upon it. And is it to be supposed that their profession, in such a case, should honour them? They do the greatest indignity imaginable to the worthy name which they profess; nay, it is blasphemed by them, and through their means is evil spoken of by others.

But yet it may be said, as to all this; "Are we not then to call such Christians as profess themselves to be such? Are we not to give them the name?" Truly controversies about names are always to little purpose. It is no great matter by what name such persons are called. I am willing to give them all that their profession reasonably can be understood to entitle them to. They are by profession Christians. But what can that signify to any man's being in reality what he does profess himself to be? I will therefore say, such a one is a professing Christian; and what can they make of this? What advantage is it? They are called Christians, just with the same propriety that you would call the picture of a man, a man. Though perhaps not altogether with that propriety neither; for truly a good picture is more like a man, than such persons are like real Christians. It is a very bad picture indeed, that would not be more like the person it pretends to represent, than many such men are to true, sincere Christians. Possibly we may call the carcass of a man, a man, when it is rotten and stinking. "Such a man (you say) lies buried there;" but you know very well that the corpse is not the person himself. And yet there is more propriety in using such language in this case; because such a one was a man, but he whom we speak of never was a Christian, and God only knows whether he ever will be one!

We call such persons Christians, in like manner as in a play, or theatrical representation. One we call the Grand Seignior, and another an Emperor, according to the parts they act. In this manner, I say, we may call the persons before spoken of, Christians; for they perform a part, and make a show on the stage of the world in performing cheap and easy acts of Christianity. Or it is something like the compliments of one person to another, to whom he would pretend friendship; and under that pretence hides the greatest malice, till he can have an opportunity of showing it with effect.

Now if such a profession as we have been speaking of, will signify so little to the purpose mentioned in the beginning of this discourse, the giving of a man the reputation of being religious among men; how much less can it signify to that higher purpose, the entitling him to a reward from God! Surely it is less possible to deceive him.

And whatever advantage is gained in this world by such an empty, inconsistent profession, it is infinitely less than the final reward of God, which will be given to those, who both profess and practise religion in sincerity.

But before I proceed to this important point, suffer me to exhort you all seriously to consider of something better, than such an empty, self-confuted profession as this, to be a support to you, in such time as we have lying before us. Surely, in a season of distress, there are no sort of persons whose case is to be lamented so much as theirs, who have nothing for a support but only this pitiful thing, this empty, self-confuted thing, we have been speaking of. Oh! the cold comfort it will give a man's heart, when he comes to suffer affliction, to say, "I have been called a Christian and a protestant; I have professed on the right side, and have gone on in the right way; but, alas! all the while have been fighting against the very design of religion I have professed, by a contrary life and conversation!" Will this bear up the sinking heart of such a one in a season, when the guilt of his former course, through a long tract of time under the Gospel, stares him all at once in the face?

Labour then to do more than barely to profess to know God; since a bare profession will signify nothing with him, and but little with men. And truly it must signify very little to yourselves, to your own comfort and consolation in an evil day; when gloominess, blackness, and darkness cover all on every side. There may then possibly, if such a time should come, be room enough for consideration. Labour therefore to know God in good earnest. They that know his name, will put their trust in him, Psal. ix. 10. To have such a refuge as the eye of God in such a world as this is, what solace and satisfaction does it give the soul of a man! especially when there is nothing but darkness and terror on every hand.

To conclude, I shall only take notice to you of one passage in the book of Daniel. "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he (the king there spoken of) corrupt by flatteries; but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" or wonders, Dan. xi. 32. These passages refer to the time when Antiochus fell with fury upon the Jews. A great many of them, when the aspect of the times was frowning upon their religion, did then prevaricate, and do wickedly against the covenant; that is, turned from their religion and complied with his idolatry; but of such of the people as knew their God, it is said, that they should be strong and do exploits. It is a great matter to know God in such a time. He that has the knowledge of God possessing and filling his soul, will have God represented to him as *the all in all;* and this whole world will be before him as a vain shadow, a piece of pageantry, a dream, a vision of the night. He who is invisible will be always with us, when we once come to be of the number of those who know God, in the manner we profess to do it.

SERMON III.*

2. I NOW proceed to show, that a bare profession of religion cannot entitle any one to the rewards of it with God. And the argument is capable of being drawn, as was formerly intimated, from the less to the greater. If it cannot entitle one to a reputation amongst men, much less can it to the reward of it with God. And it will be conclusive two ways. In the first place, that the gain and advantage of the rewards of it with God, is unspeakably greater than the reputation it can give us among men. If then it cannot entitle one to the less, it cannot to the greater. And then in the next place, that to deceive men, by such a profession, is infinitely less difficult than to deceive God. They who cannot deceive men by such a profession, joined with a practice so grossly wicked as is here expressed by the apostle, can surely much less deceive God. There is, even in the minds of men, a judgment concerning them contrary to that profession; "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes."[a] It speaks that language, carries that signification with it in the mind and judgment of any common observing spectator. What sentiment then must it beget in the mind of God, who sees immediately, and without the intervention of any argument, beholding things just as they lie in themselves! But besides this double argument, from the less to the greater, there are several other considerations, that will evince the same thing. As,

1. Is it the declared rule of God's righteous judgment, to deal with men finally according to their works, and not merely according to their profession; according to what they do, and not to what they pretend. It is the constant tenor of Scripture, (of which you cannot be ignorant who are wont to read your Bibles,) that God will in the last day "render to every man according to his works,"[b] as it is in sundry places. And in the epistles to the Asian churches, our Saviour putting on the person of a judge, thus addresses himself to the one and the other of them; "I know thy works."[c] Immediate cognizance is taken of them, even of those which are most latent; much more of those which are apparent and manifest, as the works we have spoken of are. Upon this account he makes himself known to them by the description of one "who trieth the heart, and searches the reins, that he may render to every one according to their works."[d] And he is further represented as one who has "eyes as a flame of fire,"[e] searching into the very things wherein it takes place. And we are told that in that very day, it is not the saying unto him, "Lord! Lord! that shall entitle any one to the kingdom of heaven; but the doing of the will of God the Father who is in heaven."[f] Where our Saviour also further assures us, that those who shall make this profession, without a suitable life and conversation, will be rejected in this awful manner, "Depart from me! I know you not."[g] But under what notion, or for what reason, are they thus to be abandoned? As workers of iniquity. Thus we see their evil works will cast the balance against all their pretences to that which is good.

2. We are further to consider, that it is an unreasonable thing to imagine, that God will give men a title, without giving them a capacity for enjoying the rewards of the blessed state. Certain it is, that mere profession qualifies no one for this happiness; therefore it is not reasonable, that it should entitle any one to it. A man is never a whit the more capable by his profession of dwelling with God, in another world; of immediately beholding with satisfaction his blessed, glorious face. To what purpose is a title, where there is no capacity? It would not consist with the wisdom of God, to divide these things, which must necessarily concur to one end, namely, to his own glory, and the person's fitness for the enjoyment of Him. Men are wont to be wiser. A title with them fails, when a capacity does. They cease to be entitled to an estate, who by a natural incapacity cannot enjoy it, as for instance, fools and lunatics. Again,

3. Their profession is so far from entitling them to the rewards of another world, which belong to those who are sincerely of the true religion; that, being joined with a wicked life and evil practices, it provokes God so much the more highly against them, engages the Divine wrath and vindictive justice, so much the more directly to their ruin. And this on several accounts. As,

(1.) Because such a profession demonstrates, that these persons sin against so much the more light; otherwise what makes them profess at all? They who profess religion, as a great part of the world do not, certainly must be supposed to know more. We do not call them professors of the Christian religion, who were born among pagans, and always have lived as such among them. They who profess Christianity, are supposed to live (and do so for the most part) in the enlightened region; in that part of the world through which the Gospel light hath diffused itself. This is therefore a most horrid thing, for the works of darkness, and of the night, to be transacted, where the Gospel has made it broad day. And if they, who have opportunity to know more than others, are, after all, vicious and immoral, doth not this highly increase their wick-

* Preached February 12th, 1690.

a Ps. xxxvi. 1. b Rom. ii. 6. c Rev. ii. 2, 9, 13, 19. iii. 1, 8, 15. d Rev. ii. 23. e Rev. ii. 18. f Matt. vii. 21. g Ver. 23.

edness? Will not this inflame the wrath of God much more against them? And if, in fact, they do know more, is not the provocation the greater? Men certainly know something of what they profess, more or less. For as there is not in the natural world, so neither is there in the moral, any such thing as pure and absolute darkness. And when light shines round a man, it makes him the more deeply guilty, that he can find nothing else to do but to commit wickedness. Light got within! What an aggravation is that of a man's iniquities, or the works of darkness! Light shines in his judgment and conscience! Divine and merciful light projects its beams from above into his very soul, where it is held in unrighteousness! This is that which wrath flames against, even the wrath of God; which "is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and iniquity of men, who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness," Rom. i. 18. This is most highly provoking, that where divine truth might expect to find a throne, there it should find only a prison. And therefore, what can ensue upon this, but tribulation and anguish, instead of a reward? It is to him who knows his master's will and does it not, that many stripes do belong, Luke xii. 47. In like manner, we find the apostle James speaking, "To him that knoweth to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin," Jam. iv. 17. And our Saviour saith thus to the pharisees, "If ye were blind ye should have no sin; but now ye say you see, therefore your sin remaineth," John ix. 40, 41. What! "are we blind also?" say the rulers. They took it for a great reproach not to be thought very discerning. But, says our Lord, "It had been well for you if you had been blind; for since you are so knowing, your sin remains, and you are absolutely inexcusable."

(2.) It follows of consequence, that they sin with malice who can allow themselves to join wickedness with their profession; and outface, as it were, the light of that truth, which directly teaches them otherwise. For, in the case now supposed, the interest of Christ and his religion has already, as it were, fought its way through all the outworks; and there is now no further opposition but the fortress of the heart, the seat of love or hatred, of kind propensity and inclination to God and Christ, or of enmity and malice to them. The business now lies wholly at the door of the will. By how much the more of the will, by so much the more of enmity and malice there is in sinning. By how much the more of light, so much the more of will; and the more profession there is, so much the more of light. In this series do these things lie. "If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there is no more sacrifice for sin," Heb. x. 26. If you sin against this sacrifice, you are not to expect another. Your peace therefore is to be made this way, or not at all. And when a man's knowledge, as well as his profession, is against him; and his opposition to God and the design of Christianity is resolved into nothing, but mere will; there is not the least pretence, or the shadow of a reason, left to justify his conduct. All things that could have induced me to be at all a Christian, should also have induced me to be a true Christian. For there can be no reason brought that a man should be a Christian in profession, but the same reason will be equally conclusive that he should be one in reality, and in truth. And therefore, when reason, judgment, conscience, and profession, go together and are all on one side, how miserably exposed and naked is such a person, who does not fall in cordially with God, in a way of holiness, because he will not! It is with them as with the Jews to whom our Lord says, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," John v. 40.

(3.) It must be the more provoking, because there is hypocrisy in this conjunction. It cannot be without hypocrisy, that a man should lead a wicked life, and yet profess the true religion. It is very true, it looks like a very gross sort of hypocrisy, that persons should profess religion, and yet lead such lives as are visibly abominable. It is not indeed of the finer sort of hypocrisy; but by how much the grosser it is, by so much the more insolent it is. The affront is the greater, that a man should sin even in the face of heaven itself, and commit such wickedness as all the world will cry shame of, and this under the cloak of profession. Again

(4.) There is most perfidious falsehood and treachery in such a conduct; and therefore it must be the more provoking. For, in this case, men not only sin against law, since all sin is against law, "for where there is no law there is no transgression," (Rom. iv. 15.) but against the covenant too. They who profess to know God, as we have said again and again, profess to be Christians. If such therefore lead wicked and immoral lives, they sin as well against the covenant as the law; and in their way of sinning, there is treachery both against Christ, and the God of heaven.

The covenant betwixt God and his people, who are visibly related to him, is illustrated in Scripture by the marriage contract. And those who break it, God threatens "he will judge, as they who break wedlock are judged, with fury and jealousy," Ezek. xvi. 38. ver. 42. Now jealousy is allowed to be the most fervent of all the passions; and distinguished from common wrath and anger, even by this peculiar consideration in the object, the being thus related. And it is observable in what style he speaks afterward. Having discarded his people and cast them off, that they should be no longer related to him; "then," says he, "I will make my fury towards thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee," that is, to cease for ever. Thus we see, the relation being dissolved, they are no longer the objects of jealousy. Indeed while they continue a professing people there is a visible relation, and consequently they are objects of jealousy; but when the injured party has sufficiently vindicated himself, this vindictive passion ceases; and whatever anger and resentment may remain, it is jealousy no longer. Again,

(5.) They who join a religious profession and wicked practices together most highly provoke God; because they sin with the highest indignity against God, against Christ, and the religion which they profess. And it is very plain that they do so, inasmuch as herein they both mock God, and misrepresent him. They mock his sovereignty, and misrepresent his holiness. It is a plain mockery to him, as he is the Ruler of the world. For men to profess to know God, to own him as their God, and yet visibly to affront him by the most insolent wickedness; what is this like, but putting on the purple robe, and saying, "Hail, Master!" and spitting in his face at the same time? It is in a case similar to this, namely, that of a man's reaping according to what he sows, that the apostle warns Christians not to deceive themselves. For says he, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" (Gal. vi. 7.) intimating that they would be greatly deceived, if they expected to reap the reward of eternal life.

Moreover, such a conduct is a horrid misrepresentation of God, particularly as to his holiness; as if he were one who could dispense with his injunctions to men of being really holy, and sincerely good, and be satisfied instead thereof with appearances, with mere show and pretence. A most odious representation of God, as if he were like the impure deities of the pagan world! You see with what severity he himself speaks in a case like this; "Take heed," says he, "lest there should be among you a man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose hearts turn away from the Lord their God—lest there be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood: And it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying; I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man; and all the curses, that are written in the book, shall lie upon him; and the Lord shall blot his name out from under heaven," Deut. xxix. 18, 19, 20. Observe here the provoking thing, on which the emphasis is put. It is that a man should walk in a vain course of wickedness, and yet bless himself in his heart, and say, "I shall have peace for all this." Provoking it must be, because it is a horrid, reproachful misrepresentation of the most holy God; as if he intended to be a patron of wickedness, or as if it were indifferent to God how men lived, or all one to him whether they were righteous or wicked. "And does the sinner indeed think so? I will make him pay dearly for the thought! All the peace and satisfaction that he has taken

in that thought, or enjoyed in that delusive dream, shall cost him dear! for because of this shall my jealousy smoke against him."

(6.) To join profession with such a wicked practice, is to make that very profession itself a lie; and a lie, in this case, cannot but have high provocation in it, if you consider these things.

1st, In the first place, it is a lie to *him* who knows it to be so. He is an impudent liar indeed, who tells a lie to a person, whilst he himself is sensible that such person knows he lies. To come and hold forth such an appearance so flagrantly contradicted, to *one* so wise and incapable of being deceived as God is; what can be more provoking? And herefore you find that this is mentioned as the aggravating circumstance of the crime of Ananias and Sapphira, that they lied to the Holy Ghost, (Acts v. 3.) whose eye could clearly see through every disguise. Again,

2dly, To lie in this case must needs be very provoking, inasmuch as it carries in it an implicit denial of the omniscience of God; that is, by such a conduct I speak or do that, which is equivalent to such denial. I do indeed by my profession declare my belief, that God sees all things, and that to him nothing can be secret; but at the same time by my life and conversation, I do more strongly declare that he neither sees nor knows. And what is this but to deny God to be what he is? It is, as it were, as much as in me lies, to strike out the eye of the Deity. "Tush! He does not know, neither is there knowledge in the Most High, (Psalm x. 11.) he forgets it or does not behold it." Strange brutishness! "He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" Psal. xciv. 10. This is to make the omniscient God like a "blind, deaf idol in a heathen temple, that hath eyes but seeth not, and ears but heareth not," Psal. cxv. 4, 5. What a provocation is this! Moreover,

3dly, It is most repugnant to the nature of God to make this lying profession, and is therefore abominable. "To cover hatred with lying lips," says the wise man, "is abominable to the Lord," Prov. x. 18. Even such an abomination as his very nature detests. It is against his nature to prevaricate. For though he is Almighty, yet he is pleased to have this said concerning him, again and again, in his holy word, that he cannot lie; nay, it is impossible to him to do so, notwithstanding his omnipotence. It is a thing so repugnant to the true God, so contradictory to the sincerity and simplicity of the Divine nature, that you can imagine nothing more hateful and provoking.

4thly, and lastly, It is a participation of the diabolical nature to be an habitual liar in such a case as this. For we know the devil is the father of lies. "Why has Satan filled thine heart, says Peter to Ananias and Sapphira, to lie to the Holy Ghost?" Acts v. 3. It makes a man a devil before God, when the habitual course of his profession is nothing else but a lie. And that it is a lie, and ought to be so deemed by us, many passages do clearly demonstrate. "If a man say he has fellowship with God, and walketh in darkness, he lieth, and doth not the truth." The man who does thus, is guilty of a lie in practice; for God is light, and in him is no darkness at all, 1 John i. 6. So that if any one professes he has fellowship with God, and yet allows himself in works of darkness, he is guilty of a practical lie. He does by his practice give the lie to his profession. The word rendered fellowship, κοινωνίαν, signifies participation and converse, but we may understand it in a greater latitude, than to signify converse with him only, since it signifies to have an interest in him, and relation to him, and is therefore of the same import with knowing God. Israel shall say, "My God, we know thee; but Israel hath cast off the thing that is good," Hos. viii. 2, 3. There was a laying claim to God, as if they had a part or portion in him, when there was no such thing. It was but a lie. I know the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie, Rev. ii. 9. As if our Lord had said, "I take it for a high blasphemy against me, and my name, against the religion of which I have been the Author, that such persons should pretend to be of it, or to belong to me." It is at once a scandalous lie and blasphemy itself.

Thus it appears, that they who lead such wicked, immoral lives, are so far from entitling themselves to the Divine rewards by their profession, that they only expose themselves seven times more to the wrath of God, than if they had never professed at all. This effectually demonstrates, to do which was the main design of what has been hitherto said upon this subject, the vanity and folly of a mere profession of religion, without a suitable practice, let men's secret motives and views be what they will.

SERMON IV.*

Having in the foregoing discourses shown the nature of, as well as the secret motives to, a mere profession of religion, attended with vicious practices; and also the vanity of it both with respect to God and man; I shall now by way of use draw some inferences from the whole.

1. That such as make a profession do, notwithstanding their flagitious practices, highly justify the religion to which they pretend. All that has been said serves to this purpose, to let you see the excellency of religion; and to this even the very worst of men do give testimony by their profession, how inconsistent soever be their practice.

Wisdom is justified by the actions of her children, and the testimony of her very enemies. The testimony of an enemy is, of all others, the most convincing, and carries the most demonstrative evidence; because that can never be understood to come from inclination. It is a thing which deserves to be well thought of, that the very worst of men have such inward notices and sentiments of things as evidently imports, that the way they hate they cannot but in their judgment approve. Their profession is from an emanation of eternal light and truth let into their minds and consciences. They are of such a judgment, and cannot be otherwise. Light shows itself, and cannot but carry evidence with it. Conviction extorts profession from those, who consider the grounds upon which the truth of religion is established. So that by the way it is amazing to think, that men should hate others for practising the very things which they themselves in their own judgment and consciences approve.

What a justification is this of religion in the sincere professors of it? One might even say it confidently to a wicked, profane, debauched Christian, "Thou who hatest such and such for their strict walking, and holy conversation, they do more agree with thee, than thou dost with thyself." Thus do but take the real sentiments of the most vicious man, who is a professor of the Christian religion, and the life and conversation of the godly and virtuous man, and you will find them correspond well enough one with another. The one says in his mind and judgment, and by his profession also, "I own it to be a very reasonable thing, that God should be loved, feared, and served above all." The other does so, and this is his practice, to love, and serve, and fear the most high God. The one also says; "The wrath of God ought to be greatly more dreaded than the wrath of man; and that it is a matter of greater moment to please God, than all the world beside." The other actually does what the other thinks and judges he ought to do. The wicked professor, if the question be asked, will acknowledge, that it is much more considerable to him to save his soul, than to please the flesh; but the truly good man practises according to this apprehension. So that between the wicked man's notions, and the godly man's practice, there is a fair agreement; but, in the mean time, what a disagreement between the persons themselves! Thus having shown, that persons who make a profession do, notwithstanding their flagitious practices, highly justify the religion to which they pretend; I proceed to the next inference.

2. Whilst nominal professors justify those who are real Christians, they evidently condemn themselves. Such professors as these must, of all men in the world, be the most self-condemned. "Out of thine own mouth," may it be said of them, "will I condemn thee," Luke xix. 22.

* Preached February 20th, 1690.

And the like condemnation they may expect to hear at least out of the mouth of their Judge. "Thou knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent:—Thou therefore that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" (Rom. ii. 18, 23.) says the apostle St. Paul, addressing himself to the Jews of this character.

It were a hard thing to be resolved, if we should expostulate with such persons, and demand of them, "Pray why do you make any profession at all? what tolerable account can you give, why you profess to know God; to be of the true religion, or indeed of any religion at all?" It is true, as to some, they are of the Christian religion by fate, not by choice. They are thrown upon the religion which they profess. They owe their being Christians to the external circumstances of their condition. They were born in such a country, of such parents, it is the religion of the nation where they live, the religion of their ancestors, and it may be they know nothing of another. Many are Christians because they cannot help it; but with others it is very plain, that their profession is the emanation of internal light; it is the genuine product of the conviction of their own consciences, that this which they profess must be the true religion. And thus surely all persons must conclude, who ever set themselves to consider seriously and impartially its evidence and internal excellence. But the greater part never do this. Whereas if any man could be brought once to consider this point, his profession would be the product of his inward light. A light perhaps too weak to govern his practice; but too strong to be expelled by force, or extinguished by his own false and delusive reasonings. They profess those things to be true, which they would be glad in their hearts were not so. And their light, though it is too weak to rule them, is not too weak to affright them. In a word, it is too strong to be mastered by any thing they themselves, or others, have to say to the contrary.

I would in this manner appeal to any such person if he hath the common understanding of a man, with reference to the great articles of his own creed. You say, you "believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." And what! is it not most reasonable, in your own judgment and conscience, that you should do so? It may be you had rather that an article, directly opposite to this, were true. But do you think it more likely, that this world did some time or other rise up of itself, than that it was made by an almighty, wise, invisible Being? You say, you profess to "believe in his Son Jesus Christ your Lord." And is not this, if the matter be examined, far more reasonable to believe, that Jesus is the Son of God, and is in right and title your Lord; than that he was mortal, and came into the world to cheat mankind? Is it more likely that the Gospel, of which he was the Author, was all a cheat? that his religion, which was sealed by so numerous and glorious miracles, and brought down to our knowledge in such unquestionable records, was an imposture? Is it likely, when he had "witnessed that good confession before Pontius Pilate," that he sealed it with his blood to deceive the world, or that he died only to mock mankind? If men would consider, their profession would certainly be the emanation of their light, and the conviction they have of the truth of what they profess. They must however be sensible, that this profession is a standing testimony against them. Nay, though they profess they know not what, nor consider the grounds and reasons of it, yet they are self-condemned.

But why do they profess, if they don't understand? Why do they not understand what they may? They profess they know God. Either they do know him, or they know him not. If they do not, why do they profess at all? If they do know him to be God, what a soul-commanding thought should that be! "In Judah is God known, and his name is great in Israel," Psalm lxxvi. 1. Has not Israel known God? A thing not to be imagined, that he should be ignorant of him. We have then, for the most part, the seminal principles of true religion; which only need to be reflected on, to enable us to discern how reasonable and coherent a frame that of the Christian religion is. Which when we come to apprehend it, and consider its excellent nature, the more we find it deserves to be considered; and, of consequence, professing with the more knowledge, the greater must our condemnation be, if our lives are repugnant to it. For can any man believe these two things, that there is a God who made heaven and earth, and that Jesus Christ is his own Son; and after that believe that it is more reasonable to disobey than to obey that great God; or be subject to him, who bought us with his blood, and purchased to himself a dominion over them and all mankind? I would fain see the man and hear what he could say for himself, who professing to believe, that there is one Creator of all things, and one Redeemer, who has procured to himself a dominion over all by his death, shall say, "I hold all this; but I will withal hold, that it is a great deal more reasonable to affront than to obey them." What man would dare to say so? Who can believe there is such a God, who, by the right of creation and redemption, claims a governing power over them; and yet imagine that it can be safe for them to live in open hostilities against so rightful a dominion and irresistible power? In a word, who can say, "I believe there is a judgment to come, but I have no need to prepare for it? It is full as safe to put all to the venture, as to prepare that it may go well with me in that day."

All these things considered, what self-condemning creatures must these professors be! especially when the secrets of all hearts must be opened, and all these latent sentiments be exposed to public view! How will men quake when they come to be expostulated with, by so high and indisputable an authority? when terrible majesty shall plead with them, in the following manner! "Was that religion, which you professed, true, or was it false? If it was false, why did you profess it? If true, why did you not practise it? You either believed there was a God, or that there was none. If you believed the notion of a God was but a fancy, why did you worship him? But if you did believe there was a God, why did you not constantly obey and serve him?" Again, "Either you took Jesus Christ to be an impostor, or a Saviour and Lord. If you took him to be the former, why should you be called after his name? Why did you number yourselves among his deluded followers? But if you took him to be the Son of God, why did you not subject your will, your soul, to that government of his, which he founded in his blood?" Oh! then, what a confounded creature must that be, who has lived under such a profession, and in such wickedness at the same time, all along? When such a one shall remember with regret that ever he was a Christian, or that he ever heard of the name of Christ! When it shall be the matter of his too late wish, "O that I had been born a Scythian or Barbarian! that I had lived in a den or cave and had never seen man; or had lived without having an opportunity of ever hearing that there was a God!"

3. We may further take notice, how little there is of shame and modesty left in the world, with reference to the behaviour of men towards God. We find, with relation to human affairs, and transactions with men, there is such a thing as shame; which, as bad as the world is, has a great power and influence over them. If it were not for this, the influence that shame and common decency have in the world, there would be no living; and it would be a great deal worse. If it were not a shame to lie openly drunk in the streets, wallowing in one's own vomit; if it were not a shame to commit filthiness in the sight of the sun; if it were not a shame to be unclean, or to be a thief; or if men in general had given over all regard to a good reputation among their fellow-creatures; the world would certainly abound with worse and more numerous monsters.

And this useful passion evidently influences men in this very matter of professing, as it restrains them from making professions that are not suitable to them. An ignorant ploughman would be ashamed to profess himself a statesman; or a cobbler, a merchant. But how strange is it, that no modesty or shame have any influence in this case! that is, in the affairs and deportments of men towards God.

The matter is this. In reference to the things which they have to do one with another, men are awake and in their wits; but with relation to God, and the concerns of religion they are in a continual sleep and dream. And

you know we don't use to reflect with regret upon the remarkable incongruities in our dreams. When therefore men, who connect together the most incoherent things in a dream, can do the like in matters of religion, it is very plain they are not in their wits. We reckon that none but such as are out of their wits, none but such as are fit to be in chains and a dark room, would in their restraint and under the rod, call themselves lords and dukes, and I know not what names besides of the greatest sound. But I beseech you to consider the case with attention. Is there not a greater disagreement between the spirit and character of a wicked man, and the names of a believer; an heir of salvation, and an expectant of glory? Is there not an unspeakably greater disagreement? And yet here, men are not ashamed to profess at this rate; to own a profession that imports them to be true believers, the sons of God, and heirs of heaven; while they are abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.

4. It appears from hence, that there is as little fear of God among men, as there is of shame. "The wickedness of the wicked says in my heart the fear of God is not before his eyes," Psal. xxxvi. 1. Whatever they fear, they do not fear the Almighty. They make no scruple of doing things which import an absolute denial of his existence. What a tremendous thought is this to a considering soul! Methinks this should strike with consternation, even a soul made of earth. What! does their practice amount to a denial of God? O think what this imports; what it is to deny his existence! This is to throw all things into confusion. This is to ruin the creation, as much as in us lies; and to take away the root of all things, and consequently the things themselves. Finally, this is to commit felony on myself and my own life. How! art thou a man, if there be not a God?

But it is the practical denial of God that we chiefly speak of; a denial of his authority, and the rights of the Divine government. Like Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" Exod. v. 2. This impious king speaks more according to the truth of the case, and consistently with himself, when he says, "I know him not." But so rooted is that power, and right of governing in the Godhead, and so necessarily does it result from the supposition of a God, and a reasonable creature in being; that it is impossible there should be a denying of that governing power, without denying his being too. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God;" (Psal. xiv. 1.) that is, does not believe there is no God, so much as wish there were none.

However, in respect to men, fear has great influence. How will it, for instance, restrain men from conspiring against the government? How are men afraid to say or do any thing, that may admit of any such interpretation; or that looks like a design to subvert the government, under which they live! But how strange is it, that men have no fear in them with reference to the Divine government, unto which they profess a subjection! Will any man look upon himself as a loyal subject, for speaking good words of the king? Especially when it could be proved, that he was forming designs against his person and authority. One would think a man's heart should never endure to think that he is liable to such a charge as this, with respect to God, the King of kings. Thou, O wretch! art guilty of practically denying, and abandoning, the Author of thy life and being, the very Father of thy spirit, and him who gave thee breath. Thou hast marked thyself out as a common enemy to the creation of God. And how can that man expect to draw another breath, who breathes only by the favour of that God whom he denies?

5. As to the main purposes of religion, it is plainly no great matter what religion a wicked man is of. It is all one whether he be of a false religion, or falsely of the true; except only that his case on this latter account, is worse. As the apostle says, with respect to the Jews, "Circumcision profiteth, if a man keep the law; but if he breaks the law, his circumcision goes for uncircumcision," Rom. ii. 25. Thy baptism profits, if thou keepest the Gospel; but if thou observest it not, thy baptism shall signify nothing. Though a man cannot be saved under any religion, yet he may perish under any one. What a poor pretence is it when one has nothing to trust to and rely upon, as the ground of his eternal hope, but only that he is an orthodox man! An orthodox son of this or that church! So far it is well. But what does it signify to be an orthodox drunkard, an orthodox swearer, an orthodox sabbath-breaker? If such would but admit one to reason soberly with them, I would ask them, "What! do you not believe, that holiness is as essential to Christianity as truth? Do you not think that the decalogue is of as good authority as the articles of your creed? is there not the same authority for the *agenda*, as there is for the *credenda*, of a Christian? Has not any man, that owns the Christian name, as great obligations to be pious, sober, and chaste, as he has to be true, or right in his principles?" There is certainly the same authority for the one as for the other. What does a man hope he shall gain, by tearing the essential parts of the Christian religion asunder, as much as in him lies; or by dividing Christianity from itself?

6. We see how weak a thing the light of an unregenerate person is, and how little reason such a one has to glory in his profession. How weak, I say, is this light! too weak to restrain him from such gross inconsistencies as these are; as weak it must be, since it permits him to run into the most palpable absurdities; and even suffers him to make a profession that he knows God, the great Lord and Ruler of all things, whilst he lives in a continual disobedience to him. With some, indeed, the knowledge of the true religion does signify more. We read of some that, by the knowledge of God, have escaped the corruptions of the world, through lust; (2 Pet. ii. 20.) but with many others, you see their light is so impotent and inefficacious a thing, that it cannot withhold them from making beasts of themselves, instead of Christians. And that is a doleful thing to think of, that a man should have light to no other purpose than to damn him! A light, which upon all other accounts is darkness, and makes his profession of religion so much the worse and more dangerous. To this purpose our blessed Saviour speaks, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matt. vi. 23. The knowledge of some Christians is no better than mere paganism. Whatever it is, they do the same things they would do if they had none. As to certain points indeed they are of such a belief; but they walk and practice, as if they were of a quite contrary faith. How weak then is their light, and how deplorable is the case of such men!

Do we not see then how little they have to boast of? Such a profession as this is can surely be a matter of no glory to them. Nor is to be accounted so, any more than we would esteem the title of lord or knight, a glory to the man who is forced to go naked or in filthy rags every day. So they walk in their nakedness, like accursed creatures; as they are implied to be by the blessing which is pronounced on those, who keep their garments so, as that their nakedness may not appear, Rev. xvi. 15. It is but a poor glory and empty honour to be called Christians on such terms!

7. We further learn, how mysterious a piece of self-contradiction such a wicked professer is, and how unhappy his condition must necessarily be. A Christian of an unchanged heart and vicious life, has one and the same object of worship and contempt. It is a strange kind of monster that this must needs be. No eye hath ever seen any thing more monstrous! Having the head and face of a Christian, joined with the hands and heart of an atheist. So true and pertinent was the saying of a noble Italian lord, "That there is no monster in all the world worse than a speculative atheist, except one; and that is the practical atheist, who is the more horrid monster of the two."

How unhappy then must such a person be! To every good work reprobate, and yet a professor! How uneasy must his life be, who must do many things, which, in substance, are good works, that he may keep up the show of religion, let them be never so much his aversion! How uneasy a life, I say, is this, to go against the grain, and to do things in a continued course for which a man has no heart or relish! To come into the assemblies of God's people when he had rather be somewhere else; and many other such like things must he do to keep up a profession. This is indeed a most grievous thing, for a man to have only an artificial religion, which proceeds from no vital principle, and perfectly disagrees to the habit of his soul,

and the bent and temper of his heart. And that a man should toil at it all his days, is a sad case; especially when it is considered, that it is but for a shadow, for that which will turn to no account, or rather to a heavy one.

8. Lastly, We see hence the necessity of renewing grace. This is absolutely necessary, not only to reconcile man to God, but also to reconcile him to himself: to make the man to agree with himself: who without the grace and spirit of regeneration, neither agrees with God, nor his own soul. He fights with heaven, and his whole life is a continual fighting against himself. He practises wickedly against his profession of godliness; directly contrary to all his worship and his own prayers. Methinks therefore, this should make such a man long to feel the power of regenerating grace, that he may bring things to an agreement between God and himself. For the light which makes him profess, does not govern his practice. It is too weak, as you have seen, and insufficient for this purpose. There needs something more to change him, and to give him a right spirit; and when that is done, then all will be well. Then he can take pleasure in God, his worship and converse, and to know good work will be reprobate any more.

But here a great *question* might arise; to wit, "What should a man do in the mean time, who has not attained, as yet, the regenerating grace of the Spirit of Christ? Is it not better (that so there may be greater harmony of things) that he should give over professing, since he has only that in his own power? For it is in his power to give up his profession, though not to change his heart and life. Or, at least, should he not do so till there be a change, that may bring his profession and the course of his walking to a perfect consistence and agreement with one another?" To this I answer briefly;

1. Whereas there must be a change in order to an agreement between profession and practice, certainly that must be changed which is wrong. It is very evident the change ought to be where the fault is. He professes a religion which is true; the alteration then must not be there, but in his spirit and his course, which are wrong. And,

2. As the question supposes the laying down a profession as being in one's own power, there must and ought to be a greater regard here to moral power than natural; that is, to what I may do, rather than to what I can do. There is nothing truly possible to me, but what is lawfully possible. And so it is not in my power to go and profess a false religion, and abandon the true.

3. That till there be a change made, it is better to give over professing and the like, is to talk impertinently; because there is no moment of time, wherein it is permitted to live in an unconverted state. Do we think it lawful for us, so much as one moment, to live in rebellion against God, and his Son Jesus Christ? And therefore,

4. That power we want must be sought for, and that immediately; and be prayed for with an earnestness suitable to the exigence of the case; saying, "Lord, I am a monster, as true as I am a man amongst men! I shall be a lost creature, till I am changed!" Therefore do not talk of laying down your profession a moment; because you do not know but Divine grace may set all right in the next; only there should be a looking up to heaven, with a continual fervent desire of it. And methinks no one, who sees cause enough to suspect his case to be bad, should go away without lifting up a craving eye to God for assistance; saying, "Lord! for that grace that may work this necessary change! That may change me from being a self-repugnant creature, and liable to thy wrath; to a happy consistency with myself, and a meetness to enjoy thy rewards, and the inheritance of the saints in light!"

And, to conclude, what obligation to thankfulness and praise lies upon those, whom the grace of God has brought matters to a blessed agreement with themselves? So that their continual profession is the product of a new nature; and their habitual temper and practice ever harmonious and consistent with it. Oh what a blessed case is this!

* Preached March 27th, 1681.

SERMON V.*

WE have, in the foregoing discourses, already shown in the general, that men may profess the true religion, and yet lead very wicked lives; be "abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate:" and of consequence, that they who do so, may be said by just interpretation to deny the religion they profess.

From these two propositions connected together, we have shown, what sort of profession is here meant; what the persons who make it may be, notwithstanding, as to their moral character; moreover, whence it is that any man should make a profession of religion, when the temper of his spirit, and the whole course of his practice, are so repugnant to it; and finally, the folly and vanity of all this have been largely shown, both with respect to God and men; inasmuch as, by this means, men do not acquire the reputation of being what they would be thought to be, that is, religious; nor have any share in the divine rewards of religion, in the future state. To all which have been subjoined several important inferences and useful reflections. But there is yet further use to be made, partly for the detection and conviction of such as do vainly profess; and partly for direction, that we ourselves may not do so. If it then be asked, "What sort of persons are they, who may be understood to overthrow their profession, and to make it a mere nullity, or of no significance? I answer; that though there are indeed sundry sorts of professors, who may be said so to do, yet all are reducible to these two general heads.

I. Such as do profess the true religion, but so falsified and corrupted, as that the very object of their profession is strangely altered from itself. They profess what, originally, was the true religion; but as they profess it, it is not true. Or else,

II. Such as do profess what is actually, even still, the true religion, but do it very untruly; that is, are not sincere in that profession.

I. The first sort of persons in the Christian world, who may be said to overthrow their profession, and to make it a mere nullity, are those who profess the true religion, but greatly falsified and adulterated: that is, they profess what, originally, was the true religion; but as they profess it, it is not true.

Now, though this class is capable of sundry subdivisions, yet since our part of Christendom is generally divided into those who are of the Roman communion, and those who protest against it, I shall only speak of them; that is, of those who call themselves catholics; and not of all them neither; but only of such as do practically hold such principles superadded to pure Christianity, as must necessarily make it another religion. I mean when they hold such principles practically, as corrupt the true, simple Christian religion, or the genuine Gospel of Christ, as it was delivered by him and his apostles. For indeed amongst those who are members of the church of Rome, not only charity, but justice, obliges us to distinguish thus far: that, as it is possible for a man to hold very good principles, which have no good influence upon his spirit and practice; so it is possible also, that men may in speculation hold some very bad principles, which have not that poisonous influence on their spirit and practice, to which they naturally tend. And therefore, if what is the substance of the Christian religion be found in them, notwithstanding many corrupt additions and gross falsehoods; if by the special favour and grace of God the true Christian principles only become impressive on them, and the false corruptive ones not so, which are of human invention; these are an exempt sort of persons, whom I have nothing to do with in the present case.

But because I must be within those limits, which it is fit the text should prescribe to me, I shall only treat upon one principle, which is practical, as we have reason to apprehend, with multitudes of that communion; and which the very terms of the text do lead us to take notice of. "They profess to know God, but in works they deny him." So in like manner, those, whom I allude to of the church

of Rome, profess to know God. But what God is it? Who, or what is that God which they practically own? Is it not another than the true and living God, whom they practically acknowledge as such? It is well if it be not so, with the generality of that way and persuasion! I mean that very God, of whom you have a description given by St. Paul, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians: 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4. namely, "the man of sin, the son of perdition: who exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." They do profess indeed to know the living and true God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: but the god whom they practically own, serve, and obey, is this same god that is here referred to by the apostle. Their god is a man, and that man a monster of men. In respect of pride and malice, more a devil than a man. In respect of sensuality and impurity, more a beast than a man; as you know he is so called in the Holy Scriptures.

This is actually the god, who is practically acknowledged as such by too great a number of professing Christians in the world. The principle therefore I now insist upon, is the ascribing a divinity to that creature, whether it be one single person, or a succession of persons, or a community according to some. This principle, so far as it is practical, and governs their religion, makes it quite another thing than what it truly and really is in its original purity. And though it be very true, they will tell you, that they only intend or mean an under deity, or a vicarious sort of godhead, which they place in this creature; and so think to salve the matter by alleging, that they do not idolize nor deify him; I therefore desire the following things may be considered.

1. That if it should be said, it is only a vicegerency which they ascribe to this same god of theirs, yet if their hearts terminate on him whom they call vicegerent, and their religion is carried no higher, this is to deify him as much as in them lies. What does it signify to acknowledge in speculation one superior to him, while in a practical sense their minds and hearts, and the sum of their religion, do centre and terminate here? As to multitudes of those who call themselves catholics, they trust in no higher object than the pope. All their reliance for pardon and salvation is ultimately on him, and all their obedience and subjection terminates on him. To call him therefore vicegerent only, when he is practically made the ultimate object of their religion, does not salve the matter at all.

2. I say further, and inquire, Where is their charter for this vicegerency? If they call him God's vicegerent, who has nothing to show for it, and so accordingly place a religious trust in him, what does it signify to say, that the respect and honour they pay to him is as to God's vicegerent? If a man should pretend to be for the king, while he really rebels against him, will that pretence be any excuse for me, if I fall in with them who are under this leader? There wants so much as a colourable pretence for this vicegerency. It would make some blush, others laugh, to hear the allegations they bring for it. How weak are some! how ridiculous are others! how remote, absurd, and insignificant are they all indeed taken together! That passage, for instance, the words of our Lord to Peter upon his remarkable confession of his Messiahship, is much insisted upon: to wit, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xvi. 18, 19. But how this should signify any thing to the popedom, I cannot conceive. What a strange fetch must it be to imagine any thing in such a passage to this purpose! No more power was given to him than what was given to the rest of the apostles. For to all the apostles, as well as Peter, Christ gave the power of the keys, as it is called, as appears from that parallel passage in the Gospel of John; where we are told, that Christ after his resurrection "breathed upon his disciples, and said unto them all, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins *ye* remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins *ye* retain, they are retained," John xx. 23. Which is the same thing with saying to all the apostles, "I give unto *you* the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and what you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," Matt. xvi. 19. That is, you acting according to the rules I left you, what you do on earth of this nature, shall be ratified in heaven too. But how impertinently is this drawn and appropriated to Rome! There is not the least mention of the grant of this power being confined to Peter, as bishop of Rome; and his successors as such. Nor is it to be imagined, what colour there should be of any reasoning from thence to this purpose, for it no more appears, that Peter was ever a settled, residing bishop at Rome, than that Paul was; who, it is most apparent, had a settled residence there. No such thing is recorded of Peter in the Holy Scriptures; and as to what is said in history on this matter, is variously disputed this way and that; though indeed it need not to be so, because it can signify nothing to the purpose. Those who say Peter was there as well as Paul, do also say, that they both suffered martyrdom in the same year. Besides, if there were a primacy to be settled where Peter did reside, it should rather have been at Jerusalem; where it is certain he had his residence for some time, and where it is more likely he presided, than at Rome. And because it is said to Peter only, "Feed my sheep!" John xxi. 15, 16, 17. are we to conclude from thence, that he must be the universal bishop? Is not this charge to be considered as given to the rest of the apostles, as well as to Peter? and not only so, but to all the ministers of the Gospel? So idle and trifling are these pretences to primacy for Peter, as bishop of Rome, and his successors as such!

3. They do, at least many of them, very frequently ascribe to this same god of theirs more than vicegerency, and what indeed is inconsistent with that state and character. They do it professedly; and if hereupon they do it practically, as we have great reason to apprehend multitudes may, then it is most certain that this false god of theirs, is the only object of their religion. Upon this point, because it is so much to my purpose, I shall largely insist. In the

(1.) Place, it is very apparent, that they give to this fictitious god of theirs, the titles that do peculiarly belong to the great God and his Christ. Nothing is more ordinary and common with them, than to call the pope by the titles of *beatissime* and *sanctissime Pater!* The *most blessed and most holy Father;* and other titles they are not afraid to apply to him, which the holy Scriptures give to God and his Son. A person speaking of one of the popes says, "His name is Wonderful;" assuming that which is spoken of Christ in Isaiah, Isa. ix. 6. and applying it unto him. They call him also, in express terms, the *head* of the Church, the *husband* of the church, the *foundation* of the church; titles peculiarly belonging unto Christ. One says, "He is the *head, excluso Christo;*" that is, *Christ being excluded,* and without any consideration of him. "He is (saith he) the *ackmè;* the supreme, and *chief* of the church, *Summum caput ecclesiæ,* succeeding in the room of Christ; and all power is translated from Christ to him." Not derived, but transferred; as if it were removed from Christ, or as if he ceased from his primacy over the church, and transferred it himself to this vicarious god. For this they think a modest name, and that the power is lodged in him, so as to reside in Christ no longer. And hereupon, though they do speculatively own a superior head of the church, yet practically they own no higher when this notion obtains among them. Here their religion stops. Here it seems to terminate, and to go no higher. For how little suspicion do they discover, that those sins are yet unpardoned, which the pope pardons! Or how little dread appears among them, of having his judgment reversed by a superior judgment! And so they speak of this headship, which they attribute to the pope over the church, and represent it in the same manner in which it is attributed unto Christ, that is, they say the influence of life is communicated by him to the church; and represent it as flowing from this fictitious head of theirs. But,

(2.) Such scriptures also, as speak of the dignity, power, and greatness of Christ, they do most familiarly apply to the pope; some ridiculously, and others impiously, even to blasphemy itself. That passage in the eighth Psalm is an instance; "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy

hands," Ps. viii. 5, et seq. This passage which the apostle applies to Christ, they apply to the pope. And it is not to be imagined with what absurdity they do minutely apply the several following particulars to his holiness. As where it is said, Thou hast given him to have dominion over the fowls of the air, by that they would have the Gentiles understood; by the oxen, they understand the Jews; by the beasts of the field, the pagans; and by the sheep, the generality of Christians; and finally, by the fish of the sea, or whatsoever passeth through the paths thereof, which are also said to be put under his feet, they understand purgatory. So ridiculous that nothing can be more so!

But in other of their applications they are most horribly blasphemous. They have not scrupled to apply to him such passages as these; "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth," Psal. lxxxix. 27. Yea, and even this also, "From his fulness we have all received grace for grace," (John i. 16.) which some of their writers have, in express terms, applied to the pope.

(3.) Which is yet more particular, they ascribe unto him infallibility, as to all matters of faith; which is a peculiar attribute of the Deity, as such. "He cannot err," says one expressly concerning the pope; "he cannot be deceived. It must be conceived concerning him that he knows all things." Another expresses himself thus; "He has all things in the chest, the cabinet of his own breast. He is unto all the world a living law, that cannot err; and in which there is no obliquity:" and the like.

How very likely is it, that where this notion is prevailing, practice itself should go no higher than this notion! How likely is it that the faith of multitudes, on this account, must terminate on this supposed infallible creature! And so, what comes all that religion to, which hath, as to that part of it that consists in believing, only a man for its final object, and so is made purely a human thing?

Hereupon they resolve all the validity of the Scriptures themselves into the authority of the pope, or the church, which is much the same thing. One says, that from the church or bishop of Rome the whole book of sacred Scriptures draws all its strength. And another to the same purpose, that the sacred Scripture draws all its force from the authority of the bishop or church of Rome. Finally, another is so bold as to say very profanely, that the Scriptures have no more authority than Æsop's fables, but as they derive it from the church. So that it is very plain they place Deity upon this same creature and idol of their own making, inasmuch as they ascribe to him infallibility in all things; which is one of the peculiar attributes of the supreme God.

(4.) They ascribe to this god, the power of forgiving sins. That none can forgive sins but God is an acknowledged principle. But this power they give to this god of theirs. One of themselves preferred to the pope such an application as this; "Thou lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on me! Thou lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace!" This was actually said to, and received by, one of their popes. And it has been expressly taught of the papal power, with respect to this very matter; that whereas any ordinary bishop may remit temporal punishment, the pope has power to remit eternal; and that he has more power, as to this point, than Christ hath as man. "For (say they) Christ, as man, did only procure pardon; but the pope, as a god, does give it." Again,

(5.) They attribute unto him a power of dispensing with the very law of nature. I might instance in several things that belong to each table of the decalogue. For example, they place a power in their pope to dispense with the most solemn oaths. And one positively says, "He can make perjury righteousness, if it be for any valuable purpose; for the service of his, or the catholic cause." They say again; "that he can dispense with any of the books of the Old Testament, because he is greater than the penmen thereof." As if they had written in their own name, or as if he could not be greater than they, in any sense, but in his wealth and wickedness.

6. They ascribe to the pope, what indeed he has been wont to assume to himself, a power to alter or add to the Gospel. Not only to take off the obligations of the law of nature, but to mould too, as he pleases, the law of grace. A certain writer expressly says; that in respect to this or that particular case, he can give another sense to the Gospel. And another tells us in plain words, that he can not only interpret the Gospel, but add to it. And we find that really the popes have done so. For do not they damn to hell, against the sum and the main tenor of the Gospel, many good Christians, merely because they will not play the idolater, nor give religious homage to this great idol the pope; and do they not profess to give a title to heaven to many a vile wretch, as wicked as any can be supposed to be? And merely on this account, because they are subject to that usurped power? What is this but to make another Gospel? Christ says, "He that believes in *me* shall have eternal life." But they say, at least in their practice, "If you do not believe in the pope too, you shall not have eternal life." And whereas Christ says, "He that believeth not, shall never see the face of God;" they say, "Be he never so unholy, if he trusts in the pope, he shall be saved." And what does all this amount to, but the setting up a created thing, as the final object of religion? Is not this to dispense with all the fundamental laws of nature, and to invade the Gospel of Christ? Well may it be said that this vain mortal has set up himself above all that is called God, or worshipped as God, 2 Thess. ii. 4.

Now let men profess to know the true God as long as they will, yet if they will make another god, they take away the unity which is most essential to the Divine nature, and contrary to the first commandment, which runs thus; Thou shalt have no other god before *me*. Either they do this in speculation, or, which is in reality the same thing, in practice. Their faith and obedience terminate on this god. For all their professing to know God, who is the Most High and Supreme above all, they at least practically deny him.

And thus far I have thought proper to insist on sundry accounts, though I may not suppose any to hear me whom this does directly concern.

1st, That so we may all of us, who call ourselves protestants, have a deep sense on our hearts of the great mercy of God, in distinguishing our case. And,

2dly, That we may be duly sensible of his mercy in preserving us from such a church, as he has hitherto done: and from such men, whose principles not only allow, but oblige them to fill the world with slaughters and blood, if there be but the least dissension from their party and interest; or if people are not entirely devoted to their way.

3dly, That we may all of us understand, what a noble cause we have to struggle for against this party of men, in this difficult time in which we live; and may see what reason we have to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," (Jude 3.) and as it was given to them. And finally, to add no more,

4thly, That if ever it should be our lot to suffer by such hands, we may understand, how glorious a cause we have to suffer in; and how much better it is to suffer by such men, than to be of them. Men! whose religion instructs them in all impiety and vice; and who are much worse by the influence thereof, than they would have been by mere nature. So that any impartial unconcerned person who shall consider the case, view it in every light, and take a survey of the scheme or model of their practical principles, cannot but say, "If this be Christianity, let me be an honest pagan!"

In a word: When their doctrines lead them to such things as cruel murders, injurious treacheries, and the most horrid perjuries; when their principles rase the foundations of all human society, or tend to make it dissolve, so as that no man knows how to trust another; when mankind must even disband on these terms, and live in cells or dens apart by themselves, (for there can be no commerce one with another, if these principles generally obtain in the world,)—I say, if this be the case, it is surely better to suffer by such men, than to be of their party. Especially if we consider how these things must needs engage Heaven against them, and that Divine vengeance must fall at length upon them who have profaned such a name, and so horridly pretended to Christianity, on purpose as it were to make it odious to the heathen world. "If the Christian religion," may pagans say, "be such as these men represent it, what a strange God is their God

that will oblige them, who profess his religion, to be false, bloody, and cruel; and all for the serving a secular interest and end!"

It is easy to apprehend the mischievous tendency of such practical principles of theirs, and how much paganism is better than their religion. How much better indeed it were to have no religion; because, in this case, there is a coincidence of the most vicious inclinations with wicked principles. Now think what strength is added to a vicious inclination, when a principle falls in with it that shall justify it. Mere pagans do, many times it is true, transgress the law of nature; but as the apostle tells us, it is with their consciences accusing them, (Rom. ii. 15.) or with regret. But now, when the dictates of judgment and conscience concur with men's vicious inclinations, this is worse than it is with the heathens.

A heathen may possibly be guilty of perjury himself, but his conscience remonstrates against it, and on his own principles he is self-condemned. But when there shall be a principle which suggests to a man that it is lawful to sin, and not only so but that it is his duty to perjure himself, with how strong a stream must the current of wickedness run in the world!

And certainly at such a time as ours is, and indeed in future ages, it is to be feared, there will be this reason why such a case should be represented to the world as it is; that we may know what we have to oppose, and what it is we have to stand by in such an opposition; whether in doing or suffering, or whether with success in this world, or no. Upon these accounts I have thought it proper to insist thus far on this sort of persons, who profess the Christian religion, but corrupt and falsify it; partly speculatively, partly practically; professing to know God, while, in another sense, and more effectually a great deal, they deny the God whom they profess to own and acknowledge

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SERMON VI.*

In our former discourse we proposed to inquire, what sort of persons they are, who may be said to overthrow their profession; and to make it a mere nullity, or of no significance. Namely,

I. Such as profess the true religion, but so falsified and corrupted, as that the very object of their profession is strangely altered from itself. They profess what, originally, was the true religion; but, as they profess it, it is not true. These we have already considered.

II. I proceed now to consider the second sort of men that were spoken of: namely, such as profess that which is most true, to wit, the Christian religion in its purity; but do it most untruly, and are altogether insincere in that profession.

And, in order to this, I shall confine myself to these two heads that lie in the text, which I have doctrinally opened in a former discourse. That is, as I have already shown, they may very truly be said to deny Him in works, whom they profess to know and acknowledge as the true God: who have, in the first place, an habitual propension to abominable wickedness; or in the next place, an habitual aversion to whatsoever is good.

1. They may be truly said to deny God in their works, though they profess to know him, who have an habitual propension to habitual wickedness. There are indeed two expressions of the apostle, that are here alluded to; namely, *abominable* and disobedient: the former of which, as we have shown before,[a] speaks the wickedness to which such are propense; and the latter, the obstinacy of that propension. Which is plainly signified by the word rendered *disobedient;* which we may render more emphatically *untractableness*, such as by no persuasions can be withdrawn from a wicked course.

I doubt not but there are many such persons, who because they are not of that sort which we have spoken of in the preceding discourse, but account themselves very good protestants; and are resolved, for ought they know, to continue such as long as they live, therefore conclude they are on very good terms with God. Whether there are not many who go under this honourable name, unto whom this character too much agrees, of being obstinate in a course of wickedness, you yourselves, with too much clearness, may judge. However I hope, that your acquaintance does not lie with such persons, so as to have much occasion to observe their way and course; I hope, I say, it is not generally so with you. But who is there, whom common fame and common cry can suffer to be ignorant of the wickedness that lurks, yea that rages, under the very name of protestantism? Unless a man would shut himself up in a den or a cell, he cannot help knowing that there is a great deal of wickedness amongst us, which ought to go under the title of abominable: wickedness! which even protestants obstinately persist in. The horrid oaths, execrations, and blasphemies, which the taverns resound with, and of which the streets are not innocent;—the debaucheries of all sorts;—who can keep himself from knowing there are such things done and practised among those, who are concerned to maintain the name and reputation of being protestants, and value themselves upon it?

And yet it must be said, that though such wickedness be abominable, yet it is too little abominated. Those who are not themselves, it may be, guilty of such vices, are drawn into a participation of the guilt of others, in some measure, by not resenting, by not taking to heart, and by not mourning over the wickedness of the times in which they live. A way of partaking with other men's sins that is but too real, and too little thought of!

And it is well, if some do not partake of the guilt of others further than this, that would not be thought to countenance or approve their wicked practices; who yet, when they are in company with them, bear a part therein. Particularly to mention one instance, in drinking confusion to such or such a party, and the like; as if it were the pouring in of liquor, and not the pouring out of prayer, that is the way to engage the Almighty God to be on their side. And whither does all this tend? What seems to be the meaning and import of it but this? That men do, as it were, set themselves to tempt or defy the justice and vengeance of Heaven! To try whether God can yet find a way to turn our houses into flaming beacons, and lay this city again in a ruinous waste! Or to try what further stores there are yet in the armoury of God; what furniture in his quiver, and whether he hath any more arrows to spend upon us or no! For, to go no further than this city, I would very fain know, who that has had the opportunity to observe and take notice, can say that London is so much better now, than it was before the fire, that we have no reason to fear a repetition of any such judgment as that, or the pestilence which immediately preceded it? Unless we will think that all things fall out by chance, or casually, or by the designs of men; or that a just and holy God has no hand in the government of the world, and the ordering and disposing of events, which fall out in it. That calamity which brought this glorious city into dust, did not spring out of it; neither does affliction come from thence, though it may bring us thither.

And will men think, that the name of protestant will be a protection from such severities and awful judgments hereafter? Why then was it not so before? Do we imagine that Almighty God is so taken with names; or that they are a matter of so high account with him? Can we suppose that he will less resent, or be more patient of, affronts and contempt from a protestant, than from a papist, or a pagan? Will not wickedness be the same thing in both?

But perhaps some may be ready to say; "All this is very right; but we have more than the name of being protestants: we perform many duties that do belong to that religion." And perhaps one sort of protestants may glory and make their boast, that for their parts, they are diligent in their attendance on public worship, and devout in bearing a part in the solemnity thereof, but especially in the prayers of the church: they are very punctual in the observances of it; missing in no point of ceremony; keep exactly to all the modish and fashionable rites; have their

* Preached April 10th, 1681.

[a] See Page 630.

responses at their fingers' ends, and the like. Another sort, it may be, boast otherwise and on different grounds; who, thinking that this is not so sure a way, choose rather another kind of worship, which they fancy to be purer: and with great zeal and diligence hear the preachers, that are in most vogue amongst them, and yet it may be all the while are not the better men. So prone are persons of vicious inclinations to be any thing, rather than true Christians! To put on any shape, or pass under any denomination in the world, rather than admit of that one thing, called serious living Christianity!

But if we might but reason the matter here a little, I would observe, that be your denomination what it will under that general one of protestants; be the thing you profess, objectively, never so good; can you really think that such a profession of true principles, or the being of such and such a denomination, can in God's balance preponderate, and outweigh gross and abominable wickedness? Can those things singly considered, which are in themselves so light, entitle us to a greater share of the Divine favour, than the people of Israël could expect? Concerning whom we find, that when they were become "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquities, a seed of evil doers," and who upon their being "smitten more, did still revolt more and more;" (Isa. i. 4, *et seq.*) yet although the case was thus with them, they thought to expiate all this, and to make God some great recompense and amends by their sacrifices. Wherefore these were brought upon the altar one upon another, and mighty punctual they were in observing their new moons and solemn assemblies. When the case, I say, stood thus, How does God accept the recompense? Why thus, "Bring no more," says he, "your vain oblations, your incense is an abomination to me, and your new moons and solemn assemblies: My soul hates them, I am weary to bear them," ver. 13, 14. And to the same purpose we find it largely spoken throughout the fiftieth Psalm. And how could we possibly think it should be otherwise, if we understand at all the nature of God, or the genius and design of true religion? Which, if it serve for any purpose at all, must serve for this; "to refine men's spirits, to govern their lives, to fit them for walking with God in this world, and to prepare them for the next." What serves religion for, if not for this purpose? And of what service is their religion, which is frustrated of its main design and end? Indeed, for men to take up religion for other inferior purposes, is most grossly to debase it. It is true it should serve other purposes as secondary, and subordinate to that which is the ultimate design of it; if it was only to keep up the decorum of things. But when it is made to serve inferior purposes, as if they were primary; when it is only taken up as a badge of distinction between one party of men and another, under pretence of which men are only designing to promote the interest of a party; this frustrates its end and ultimate design. It is very true, God is pleased to twist, as it were, the interest of religion with that of a civil nature. But when this is made the chief design of the other, it is to turn it into vain idolatry; and, in effect, to disannul religion; inasmuch as all things, of moral consideration, are ever specified from the object and end.

It concerns us then to consider, how little it can avail any of us to bear such a name as we have been speaking of, if in the mean time there be a life and practice that is manifestly flagitious, and contrary in its general stream and current to the rules and design of the religion to which we pretend. Why should we think ourselves more considerable to God, or more favoured by him, than his ancient people were, namely, the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? who, notwithstanding any privileges on that account, are said upon their apostacy unto wickedness to be as the children of the Ethiopians to him; (Amos ix. 7.) that vile accursed race, the posterity of Cush, who descended from an accursed Cham.

Indeed there is little reason why their religion should at all advantage them, who do themselves most reproachfully expose and dishonour their profession. In the account of God it will be all one, protestant or no protestant, so long as men indulge to a vain wicked life. As "in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature;" (Gal. vi. 15.) so we may say, out of Christ this availeth nothing. Trojan or Tyrian will be all one, if wickedness rule and reign in the heart and life of the man. For thus the apostle Paul argues; it makes no difference in the point of acceptance with God, under the Gospel dispensation, whether a man be a Jew or "Greek, Barbarian or Scythian," and the like, since "Christ is all and in all," Col. iii. 11. In which passage he may possibly refer to a Scythian, who, having an inclination to learning, betook himself to Athens, to study the principles of philosophy that were taught there. But meeting one day with a person, that very insolently upbraided him on the account of his country, he gave him this smart repartee; "True indeed it is, my country is a reproach to me; but you, for your part, are a reproach to your country." So we may say of these professors; that though their religion is no reproach to them, yet they are a shame and reproach to their religion. It is sad indeed, that so great a part of the world should lie under so gross and corrupt a religion as that is of the church of Rome, which is a brand of infamy on its professors; but it is a far worse case when men, by their vicious immoral practices, are a reproach to a better religion, as we protestants esteem ours to be; which conduct God will severely punish, without doubt, another day. If Christian protestants behave as ill as vicious papists or pagans, while they carry a better name, it is likely God will distinguish them hereafter, just as they have here distinguished themselves; that is, they shall lie under the name of protestants in hell, as others do under that of papists. If our great Redeemer and Lord command us to reckon a disorderly Christian, who is obstinate in his wickedness, as a heathen and a publican; (Matt. xviii. 17.) pray what do you think he will account of them himself in the great day? Will he have us more strictly righteous, or equitable, than he himself intends to be?

It may perhaps here be said upon all this, "It is very true; it cannot but be acknowledged, when men make such a profession, and are of so bad lives, they greatly dishonour their religion, and unquestionably expose themselves to greater degrees of Divine vengeance than others. Yet is it not hard to judge so ill of the case, as to say, these men deny their God? They do indeed what must be owned to be very bad; but surely some gentler thing should be said of it, than that they deny the God whom they profess to know."

In answer to this, I would ask such persons the following question: to wit, Must we or you teach God how to speak? And does not the text say expressly, that this is a denying of God? We have before shown, in the former part, how much more significant an habitual denial of him in practice is, than a transient one in speculation, or in so many words. However, let us consider, and see if there be not, in this case, a plain denial of the great God. These two things I imagine will evince it. For, in the 1st place, it is plain he is denied in the attributes; and 2nd, in the relations that are appropriate and peculiar to him, as God.

(1.) God is denied in his attributes which are peculiar to his nature. As for instance, his *omniscience*. For do not such men, as we here allude to, plainly say; "How does God see? or is there knowledge in the Most High?" Psalm lxxiii. 11. Does not their practice say it? Is it not the language of their lives? And does not that speak the sense of their hearts? How can that man be said to own an omniscient God, who is gradually transforming himself into a beast? Or to believe that his jealous eye is looking on, while he obstinately persists in his sinful courses?

There is also a manifest denial of his *wisdom*. This is the attribute which magnifies itself in the frame of nature, and the contrivance of all the laws and constitutions of his government. Wisdom is the great and principal endowment of a legislator. But though God has established certain rules to guide and govern us by, and to which it is our duty to square our lives; yet says the wicked debauched wretch, "My appetite dictates to me more wisely than so." And thus the wisdom of the flesh is preferred to that which is divine. God says it is wisest and best for men to be governed, and to steer their course, by such and such strict rules; that it is best for them to be sober, temperate, chaste, just, and the like. No, say they, to consult inclination and carnal appetite is a far wiser course, than

to follow him; and this is a thing fit to be confronted to the Divine Wisdom! Further,

They deny his *power*, both as it signifies might and authority. As it signifies authority, they carry the matter as if he had no right to rule or direct them. As it signifies might, they behave as if he were not able to revenge himself on them. Moreover,

They deny his *truth*. He has declared that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.) but they seem confident they shall.

There is also in their practice and conduct a manifest denial of his *holiness*. "Be ye holy (says the Almighty) for I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 16. But their behaviour implies as much as if they said both, that they will not be holy, and that God himself is not so; whilst they imagine to themselves, that he approves the unholy course they take. And,

There is a denial of his *justice*, his vindictive justice. It is plainly saying, as it were, that he will not judge the world; that he will not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, but will deal alike with all. Yea, and which is no paradox, though it seems one, their conduct implies also a denial,

Lastly, of his *mercy* and *goodness* too. But you will perhaps say, that seems strange; for it is Divine mercy on which these men do peculiarly rely. God will be merciful when all is done. But can they be said to trust in his mercy, when they do not truly rely on his word? That which they trust in is nothing but a mere phantom, an imagination of their own hearts; and so it is trusting to themselves, and not to God. They have no other trust but that of fools, that is, trusting to their own hearts; to what the fancy suggests, or the imagination can create. For if they did hope in the Divine mercy in reality, they who had such a hope would purify themselves as God is pure. That would break their hearts and mollify their temper, so as that they would have but little disposition to be stout against God.

Whilst, therefore, men thus deny these great attributes of the Divine nature, may they not be said to deny God himself. For pray what kind of notion should we have of God, if these were set aside? What a horrid idea would that be of an untrue, unholy, unwise, unjust Deity!

(2.) God is also denied by persons of this character, with respect to the great relations in which he stands to all his reasonable creatures. I do not mean those special relations which he bears to his own peculiar people; but those wherein he stands to all in common, who are universally the work of his hands, and as the Psalmist expresses it, the sheep of his pasture, Psalm c. 3. Which relations are principally these following, to wit, those which result from his creation of us; his propriety in us; his dominion over us; and his continual beneficence towards us. But,

Do they own him as their Creator, or themselves to be his offspring, who thus bend themselves against the great Parent of all?

Do they own him as their Proprietor, or themselves as his property? The ox indeed knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, (Isa. i. 3.) but they know not theirs, saying; "We are our own; who is Lord over us?" This is at least the sense and meaning of the conduct of these men. Further,

Do they own him to be their Ruler, or do they truly call themselves his subjects, when their life is a continued rebellion? Or, finally,

Do they own him for their Benefactor? But how can they be said to acknowledge, that it is he from whom all their good comes, when they live to themselves, and not to him? It is very plain therefore they deny God in all these relations as well as in his attributes.

Now let us consider what it is to own God in an absolute, while he is disowned in a relative, sense. To say he is a God, but shall not be a God to me, what does this amount to but a denial of him? He must be acknowledged in the general relation first, before we can have any ground to hope that he stands in those of a special nature to us, in which he is related to his peculiar people. If a man should own his prince after that rate, that is, only under an absolute notion, as a great king, as he would the Grand Signior Cham of Tartary; but at the same time should avow he should be no king to him; would that profession, think you, justify a man who should oppose or rebel against his rightful prince?

Thus far then you see as to the first character, That they who are obstinate in a course of wickedness, whatsoever they profess, do most apparently in their works deny God. I shall touch but briefly on the

2. In which I propose to prove the same point, from their habitual aversion to that which is good; or a general disaffection to every good work; which is the next characteristic of this sort of persons, according to St. Paul's account.

There are those in the world who are apt to think well of their own case, because they are not of this last mentioned sort. They for their parts practise no such impieties, as many others do; none can say they are murderers, adulterers, false-dealers, and the like; and therefore they reckon their case good: just as if it should be thought impossible a man should die of any distemper but the plague. Or as if in a battle, a soldier should employ his whole care to protect his head, and not expect a stab or a bullet in his heart. So little is it considered what is so obvious to the common reason of a man!

Good comes only by the concurrence of all things which are requisite thereunto; and evil, by any failure of one of those things. It may therefore be said of such persons, "Ye are not, it may be, guilty of such and such evils, but what good do you do? from what temper of mind? from what principle? or with what disposition do you do it?" To such I address myself, and suppose, that many have this to say for themselves, that they pray; they hear God's word; they give alms; and the like. "Do you so? It is well. But with what disposition do you engage in all these duties? Is it not with an averse disinclined heart? or is it not from some corrupt root and principle or other?" The case is very forlorn indeed when men do make their boasts of the fruits, and cannot so much as show the tree! As there cannot be a good and holy principle without its connatural effects, so nor can there be right effects if they proceed not from their proper principle. There are none capable of good works, but those that are created in Christ Jesus thereunto; without this, men perform religious duties without heart or soul. To illustrate this matter let it be considered, how much the hearts of men are engaged in the work of some profitable calling or pleasing recreation; and on the other hand, how little their hearts are in prayer, in any duties in which they are to converse with God. And how can persons think to please God in those duties, in which they take no pleasure themselves? If you are not pleased with them, how do you think he should?

But it may here be said, "What! does every one deny God in his works, who feels an indisposition in himself to those which are good? Or who does good works, though many times it may be with an indisposed heart?" I answer; Is it not easy to understand the difference between the indisposition of the sick and lame, and that of the dead? Is there no difference between those, who have weak imperfect grace, and those who have none? I shall briefly point out to you some things to this purpose, which are very obvious.

(1.) The indispositions of one sort are only gradual, but of the other they are total. There is in one no taste or disposition for any thing that is good: in the other, though there be a great indisposition in the general, yet there is withal some desire after God; some inclination and tendency to that which is good. So as that they may be capable of saying, as the apostle St. Paul represents the case, "The good that I would do, I do not," Rom. vii. 19. I have a mind to it, though the bent of my mind is not so strong as it should be.

(2.) The indispositions of the one are constant and habitual, of the other only intermitted. That is, the indisposition of a wicked unregenerate heart is continued, and at all times alike; but the indispositions of a soul, which is in the main pious and good, are only by intervals. They are not always alike indisposed. There is an alteration in this case, but none in the other, so long as that spiritual death remains upon them. In a word, all good persons experience, that they have sometimes a greater relish for their duty and the service of God, than they have at other times. Besides,

(3.) The indispositions of the carnal and vicious are un-

observed and unlamented; but it is not so with those of the other character. Their indispositions to that which is good are reflected on with sorrow; taken notice of with regret; and very much bemoaned, in these pathetic words, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this death!" Rom. vii. 24. Do the dead reflect? do they lament that they are dead?—But the sick lament that they are sick, and the pained that they are in pain; and each are sensible of their respective calamities.

(4.) And lastly, good Christians strive against their indispositions in the expectation of remedy and redress; but there is no such thing in the other. The indispositions of those who are regenerate, are matter not only of their present complaint, but horror. It is not so with those of the opposite character. These like their state well enough, and are contented with the present situation of their immortal souls. Their hearts are disaffected towards God; they are far from him, and they choose to be so. But the people of God, in whom the Spirit of grace or the divine life doth obtain, are aiming to be nearer and nearer to him; and to have whatever disinclines their hearts to religion, or keeps them at a distance from him, effectually removed. Upon the whole, they may find difficulty in their course; but is there no difference between breathing with difficulty, and having no breath? While therefore those who profess to know God, but in works deny him, are really far from God; these who have the divine life in them as a prevailing principle, do breathe for the liberty of the sons of God, and to be brought into that state, where they shall love, and serve, and obey the ever blessed God perfectly, and eternally.

SERMON VII.*

I NOW proceed, by way of further use and improvement of this subject, to lay down some rules and directions, that may be of service to all who desire to be of a different spirit, or character, from those we have been considering; and would not have this ever justly said of them, that while they profess to know God, yet in works they deny him. And surely if it be considered how incongruous, how odious, how pernicious and destructive a thing this is; nothing can be apprehended of greater concernment to us, than affectually to endeavour, that we may not have this character resting upon us. That you may not, consider seriously, I pray, and observe such directions as these.

1. Once bring the matter to this point, that the profession you make may be the effect of your solemn deliberate choice. There is too much reason to recommend this rule to the generality of Christians, amongst whom, it is very apparent, there are too many, whose profession is rather the effect of chance, or fate; or any thing they are thrown into, by the concurrence of some external circumstances in their condition; than of a serious deliberate choice. How many are there who profess themselves Christians, as we observed before, merely because it is the religion of their country! or was that of their ancestors! or is established by the laws under which they live! So that it would be very inconvenient for them, too hazardous it may be, or at least scandalous, to make a contrary profession. Now it highly concerns us once to come to this, that the religion we are of be what we have chosen, and that we profess it upon mature deliberation. We are nothing in religion till we come to this. But,

It may here be said, "What then! are we to begin again? We have been Christians long, it is a profession we have long sustained, and do so to this day." To which I reply, that all is yet to begin, wherein we are still short and defective. We read concerning the people of Israel, that when Moses had brought them to a more explicit owning of God, and said, "You have this day avouched the Lord for your God, and he has avouched you for his people;" it is added, with reference to this same thing and time also, "Thou art this day become a holy people unto the Lord thy God," Deut. xxvi. 17, 18, 19. What! did they but then become his people? Not so, for they were esteemed as such before by Jehovah the God of Israel; but they became so more explicitly, and by a direct act of their own, wherein they did as it were interchange obligations with the Almighty. And several years after, when Joshua, towards the close of his life and government, was upon that solemn treaty with them, which you find in the 24th chapter, he again puts all to their choice, saying, "Choose you this day whom you will serve;" (Josh. xxiv. 15.) submitting the matter again to their judgment and election. What! were they then to choose what religion to be of? No, they were to renew their choice, and to do the thing with great solemnity and seriousness, and in a distinct manner, over again. And if it has not been done seriously and deliberately hitherto by you, let it be done now once for all; for till then, you cannot so much as say you have a religion of your own. And surely if a man would call any thing his own, it would be his religion. Your religion is otherwise but the religion of your country, or of the party to which you belong. It is not truly your own. No man would be contented merely because he lives in an opulent country, while he himself has no estate in it; or account himself rich, only because he lives in a rich nation. What should be so much mine, as my religion? But this can never be mine till I undertake to profess it, on a solemn and well weighed choice, after having considered and balanced all things, so as to be able to say; "This profession I take upon me as best, most excellent, most comfortable, as well as most glorious.'

2. Endeavour to know God in good earnest. Know him indeed, and you are then in no danger of the charge, which the apostle brings against false professors. You have been formerly told, that this phrase of professing to know God, is not to be restrained and limited unto the bare speculative knowledge of him, abstractly considered. But though it is not to be thus limited, yet it must include this as the leading, initial thing to all the rest. It is an expression for religion in general, and is sometimes put for the whole of it; and therefore it cannot be supposed to leave out that, which is the fundamental and leading principle of all, from whence the denomination is taken, and put upon the whole.

If you consider the object of this knowledge, it is not God abstractly considered. If you consider the nature of it, it is not barely notional knowledge that is sufficient; nor, as we have already shown, the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, according to that divine revelation, which is contained in the New Testament: which phrase is used in Scripture to signify the Christian religion, before the revelation of which, the Gentiles are represented as not knowing God, Gal. iv. 8. What! did they not own a Deity before? No doubt they had some knowledge of a supreme eternal Being, as the heathens had in common, (Rom. i. 19, 20, 21.) and yet their state of heathenism is said to be a state wherein they did not know God. They did not know God so as to be acquainted with the true method of worshipping, conversing with, and enjoying of him, which is discovered to us only in the Gospel. The world, says the apostle, through wisdom knew not God, 1 Cor. i. 21. It is spoken plainly of the more refined pagans, who go under the name of Gentiles. And had not they the knowledge of the Deity? No doubt they had; for it is elsewhere said, they did know him, but not glorify him as God, Rom. i. 21. The meaning is, that they did not know him through Christ as Mediator. And it was through their wisdom that they did not so know him, when they might have done it; because the doctrine of a crucified Christ to them appeared a very foolish thing, which by no means gratified that wisdom to which they highly pretended. They knew not God, that is, they were not Christians.

With respect to the nature of this knowledge, it is of a vital, efficacious, transformative quality, which alone is worthy of the name. Such is the knowledge which our Lord speaks of. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. It is such a knowledge, as by which the soul is caught into a union with the blessed object of it. He has given us understanding that we may know him that

* Preached April 17th, 1691.

is true; and we are in him, even in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. "This is the true God and eternal life," 1 John v. 20. It is a knowledge that blasts and withers sin at the very root, and so efficaciously transforms the soul into the image of God's own holiness. "He that sinneth, hath not seen God nor known him," 3 John 11. The same word there rendered *seen* signifies *known;* Ye have not heard his voice nor seen his shape, John v. 37. You have never had a true notion of God yet truly inwrought into your souls. "Awake to righteousness and sin not! I speak it to your shame, some have not the knowledge of God," 1 Cor. xv. 34. Labour then thus to know God in earnest, by such a kind of knowledge as shall influence the practice, and in the event bring about and accomplish the blessed union betwixt him and you.

3. Ponder well on the dignity and sacredness of this profession. Oh what a mighty thing is this! that whereas the world has been lost in the ignorance of God, through many successive ages, we should take upon us to profess to know him. It is too big a word for the mouth of a profane and irreligious world. That description of Balaam which he gives of himself, is grand and very solemn; "The man whose eyes are opened, that heard the word of God, that knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty," Numb. xxiv. 3, 4, 15, 16. And yet the knowledge he alludes to, and which this prophet seems to glory in, was only such as he derived from the spirit of prophecy, and not the spirit of saving, holy illumination. However, it was a great thing to come out of such a profane mouth as that of Balaam, when he came to curse the armies of Israel.

Let us then consider, I pray, what we say and do, when we take upon us to profess to know God. As I intimated before, it is an appropriative knowledge that is here pretended to. To know him is to acknowledge him as our God, as his knowing us is to acknowledge and own us as his people. This was the pretence of Israel, but connected with horrid contempt of him, as we learn from the prophets. To know God then is, I say, to acknowledge him as our Lord; our Owner, our Proprietor, to whom we belong upon a peculiar account. And consider what that account is, and under what notion we must own him to be our Lord; namely, as we are his property, and his peculiar treasure. For so are all those who are his people, by virtue of the relation which results from their mutual contract and agreement. I entered into covenant with thee, says the Almighty to the Jews, and thou becamest mine, Ezek. xvi. 8. And again, "You shall be to me a peculiar treasure before all people, for all the earth is mine." Exod. xix. 5. They who are his people he reckons them as his crown and his diadem, Isa. lxii. 3. Who, says God, shall be mine in the day that I make up my jewels, Mal. iii. 17. Those therefore who know God, and are known of him, are as the jewels of his crown, the jewels which adorn his diadem. And who would be so insolent, as to presume to place there a lump of dirt, or a clod of filthy clay! It is then very awful to think what professing to know God does import, if we only reflect on the dignity and sacredness of this profession.

4. Look upon your profession as an obligation upon you to a correspondent practice. Every profession is so understood among men; and what an ignominy were it for a man, to wear the name, when there were none of the thing to which the name corresponds! Do we look upon professing to know God only as an idle profession? as a thing which no business goes along with, nor is attended with any suitable employment? Theology was well described by him, who reckoned it was not mere knowing for knowing sake, but was the doctrine of living unto God. Moreover,

5. Comprehend as distinctly as you can in your own thoughts, the sum of that duty unto which this profession does oblige you. Learn and encompass in your own mind, the whole circle of all those duties, which a professing to know God does engage you to. Run through the encyclopædia, or the whole system of practical religion; to wit, the duties, to the practice of which you are obliged by virtue of your profession, both internal and external. Duties towards God the Father, and his Son, your Creator and Redeemer; such as agree with your acknowledgment of the mystery of God and of Christ, Col. ii. 2. Yea, and not only such, but also duties towards man too; which religion ought to influence, and wherein we are to be governed by our knowledge of God.

6. Labour thoroughly to understand the grounds on which you take upon you the obligation to every Christian duty. It is very plain that the *agenda* of religion, that is, the things to be performed by us, are grounded upon the *credenda*, or things to be believed. "I believe so and so, and therefore conceive myself as obliged to do so and so. And the common foundation of both I must reckon to be the divine authority, revealing certain principles and truths as necessary to be believed; and enjoining certain duties as consequences from thence, and equally necessary to be done." Thus go to the bottom and ground of the religion you profess, and then you have it in its original, and truly divine. But if we look upon our religion as merely human, handed down from father to son, and the like, no wonder then if we trifle with it; but no man would be adventurous, with relation to what he apprehended to be divine. Therefore is men's religion usually weak, impotent, and ineffectual; and has not its proper influence in commanding the heart, and governing the life, because the divine original of it is not apprehended. My own things, I am ready to think, may be used as I please, but I may not do so with those which are divine. In a word,

When once the authority of God is apprehended, particularly of his truth in revealing such and such things, and of his power in commanding others, with what weight do they come in upon the Spirit of a man! What a pressing question was that of our Lord to the Jews! "The baptism of John," his solemn manner of initiating men into religion, "whence was it? from heaven or of men?" Matt. xxi. 25. They were sensible of the pungency of this question, and were afraid to answer him. They knew not what to say, and could not but confess themselves guilty of a profane neglect, if they owned it to be of divine original. The image that was apprehended to fall down from Jupiter, what a sacred esteem and veneration had those heathens for it, who worshipped that idol! because the priests had deluded them with such an idle fancy. So the Christian religion becomes an operative lively thing, when the divinity of it once comes to be understood, and really believed. "We think ourselves bound," says the apostle, to the Thessalonians, "to give thanks to God for you without ceasing, that when ye received the word of truth from us, you received it not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which effectually works in all them that believe," 1 Thess. ii. 13.

7. Settle it in your minds as an important truth, that the design of that religion of which you are professors, that is, of the whole Christian institution and frame of things, is to have a people distinguished by peculiar excellencies from all other men, who are not of that profession. They must be supposed to be very slight readers and considerers of the Bible, who have not seen this to have been God's design ever since he made the world. "You shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation," (Exod. xix. 6.) says the Almighty to Israel, whose whole business was as it were religion, worship, and immediate attendance on God; being, "a royal priesthood," (1 Pet. ii. 9.) as the apostle paraphrases that expression. "Our Lord gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. And therefore he thus expostulates with his disciples, "If you do only so and so, what do you do more than others?" Matt. v. 47. Do you think I would have a people among men, professing my religion and belonging unto me, who shall be only as other men are, in whom there is nothing of peculiar excellence to be found? And therefore the apostle exhorts the Christians of Thessalonica, to aim at superior piety and virtue, saying, "Let us not sleep as do others;" for, as it follows, "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. v. 6. What! to live in the same drowsy security as others do, or as if you were still under the dominion of the same spirit of slumber, or as if the same death had prevailed over you which has spread itself over the rest of the world, what an incongruous thing is this! It is true, God

has found no difference among men, but he has made a very great one, which arises from the dispensation of his grace, rather than from nature; being determined to have a people peculiarly distinguished by their excellent spirit and eminent piety and goodness. And this is the meaning and intent of this profession of the Christian religion. Therefore,

8. Never rest upon that bare level, which it is possible some may come up unto, that are not of this profession. Some do not profess to know God in Christ at all, as Jews and pagans for instance. What the traditional religion of the former, and the mere natural religion of the latter, will carry them to, do not think that enough for you. As to the former, our Saviour expressly tells his disciples, and all that will be his followers, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 20. And yet they were the strictest sect of the Jews, as St. Paul intimates when he declares, that he had this, as well as other things to glory in, if that was of any consequence, that he himself was a Pharisee; but yet, says he, "what I thought a gain to me when I was of that religion, I reckon loss for Christ and the excellency of his knowledge, that I might know him," (Phil. iii. 5—12.) and so attain, with him, the resurrection from the dead.

You must then be able to outgo the strictest of those whom the Judaical religion had formed. For it is very apparent that when the time was come, in which Christ intended his religion should take place, after having made sufficient discovery of himself to the world, then did the Spirit of grace retire from the religion of the Jews, as being no longer of any force. And though there had been many of that religion who feared God before, yet now that the Christian institution was established, there was no ground to expect that the Spirit should breathe through that of Moses. And therefore our Lord tells them plainly, "If you believe not that I am He, that is, the Messiah and the Son of God, ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. And accordingly the apostle appeals to the Christians, at that time, in the following manner; "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" that is, the Gospel, Gal. iii. 2. In short, that religion which carries you in a course of holy practice, no higher than Judaism in effect, is certainly much short of the design of our Lord, and what your profession of Christianity supposes. But how much more may this be affirmed, if professors among us proceed no further, than the natural religion of the heathen world will carry them? Who, notwithstanding their profession to know God in Christ, yet go no higher than they in point of justice and truth, temperance and sobriety, and in a contempt of this world, as well as value and care of their better part, even their immortal souls: concerning which some heathens speak strangely. "I wonder," says one, "that whereas man consists of a soul and body, that there should be so much care taken about the latter, and the care of the soul be neglected by most, as a hated thing." And several of them have left us various discourses, concerning the greater mischief and malignity that there are in the diseases of the mind, than in those of the body, or the outward man. Maximus Tyrius has a large dissertation on this very subject,[a] and several others of them have wrote to the like purpose. Some of them also have expressed their reverence to God in a surprising manner. "I so live (says one) as always under God's eye and as apprehending he is ever prying into, and looking upon me." And how pleasant expectations and forethoughts have they had of a future felicity! It is really admirable to think in what transports some of them have been, in the expectations they had of a happy state for good and virtuous men. Now when paganism does outdo us in these respects, can we be said to answer our profession of Christianity, in which we have such an amiable discovery of God in Christ; and when also we have life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel, shining by clear and direct beams. To have Christians therefore basely creeping upon the face of this earth, and rolling themselves in the dust, so as some pagans would be ashamed to do! to see them wallowing in the impurities of sensual wickedness, which would have been a reproach to many of them! This is surely not to answer our profession.

9. Lastly; inasmuch as it is not the best institution in the world, that will do our business, without a living religion implanted in us, never rest nor be satisfied without that. And whereas there are two things intimated in the text, to be opposed to true religion and sincere profession, that is, a propension to evil, and an aversion to good; an indulgence in such a course of life as is indeed abominable, with a mind reprobate to every good work; know then, there must be accordingly a twofold power of religion, which must be implanted, to counterwork those two; to wit, a sin-mortifying power, and a quickening power. The former of which takes away the inclination to evil, and the latter an aversion to good.

There are sundry other particulars which I should mention, but have not time; only take this one thing with you, that it is never well till the operation of religion be from nature; that is, from our participation of the Divine nature, which thus exerts and puts forth itself.

SERMON VIII.*

In the conclusion of the preceding discourse it was observed, that whereas it is not the best institution in the world that can do us any service, without an internal vital principle of religion within us, therefore we should never rest till we find that prevailing in ourselves. Now in order to the obtaining this divine principle so necessary to our eternal welfare, it will be of service to lay down the following directions, in subordination to that last mentioned. Particularly,

1. That wherever this is the real state of the case, that is to say, whoever have not this internal power, this vital principle of religion, let them own it, and tell their souls the real truth of the matter. The principle here spoken of is an implanted power, enabling a person to do good with promptitude, facility, and delight. Now if such a principle as this is wanting in any, let them own it, for it is a discernible thing; and consequently where it is in fact discerned, it is fit and requisite that it should be ingenuously owned, or that persons should acknowledge this to be the real truth of the case.

I have said that it is a discernible thing. Indeed, what reason can be given why it should be otherwise? How can it be imagined that persons should not perceive whether they have such a principle or power within them, or not? What! is there so small a difference between life and death, that it cannot be perceived? nay, that it cannot be perceived by oneself? There is in men however another kind of life, which makes them capable of discussing this point: to wit, the principles of rational nature, by which I am capable of self-reflection; and of debating also this very question, whether I have any further superadded principle or not. And when I hear there is really such a principle that ought to exist in the mind, my duty is to deal closely with myself, and inquire whether I, myself, have ever felt any such thing. The question is not, whether I have any sort of life or power in the general; but have I this life, this power, this which terminates on God! Do I find a living principle within my soul which carries it to God, and makes it tend to him? The apostle Paul bids the Christians at Rome to "reckon themselvas to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" (Rom. vi. 11.) and certainly no man ought to judge falsely in his own case. There is a certain divine power which goes along with true religion; as is supposed in that passage of Scripture mentioned before, speaking of persons who had "the form of religion but denied the power thereof," 2 Tim. iii. 5. And again, says the apostle, "God hath given to us the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7. And wheresoever this power or principle is, it is a kind of natural power; that is, belonging to that new and divine nature; which is in all them that belong to God; in all that are born and begotten of him accord-

a Dissert. xiii. Edit. Davis, Lond. 1740, quarto.

* Preached April 24th, 1681.

ing to the very design of the Gospel itself. For the Gospel is appointed for this purpose, to work this divine frame in the souls of men. "The exceeding great and precious promises thereof are given us, that by them we might partake of the Divine nature;" (2 Pet. i. 4.) of a certain divine and godly nature, as those words may be read. The operations of nature, though they are silent, yet they are strong and powerful. There is no greater difficulty in the world than to withstand the course of nature. Now whether such a power is working in ourselves, is the point to be considered. Let me then ask my soul, "Do I find myself powerfully withheld from evil, as a thing against my nature? Do I find myself powerfully engaged to that which is good, as if it was connatural to me? most agreeable to my nature? Who is there that cannot tell what his nature is for and against? Do such and such acts flow from me, as the acts of nature do; from their proper and congenial principles? Had I ever such a kind of new nature, withholding me from evil, as a thing I hate; and carrying me to what is good, as a thing I love? There are a sort of living men, in respect of the life of God and religion; and there are a sort of men, who are dead: shall I be always ignorant to which party I belong? What an absurdity were it, if one should always be in doubt what sort of creature he is! that he does not know whether to call himself a man or a brute! what an absurdity, I say, is this! But certainly it is a much more important question, and of greater concernment, to have it decided whether we are the offspring of God or the devil. Whence then am I inspirited? is it from above, or is it from beneath? It is indeed most shameful to think that such multitudes of persons, that go under the name of Christians, should be contented to live all their days, like an amphibious sort of creatures, that they cannot tell themselves what sort of beings they are. Certainly he would be looked upon as a great wonder among men, who should be always ignorant of his own name; that is, not know the name which rightfully belongs to him. So in like manner it is wonderful, if persons who are destitute of the divine principle, which makes men real Christians, do not discern this to be the case. But where it is in fact discerned, it must be freely owned by all, who desire to obtain it.

2. If you apprehend this to be the case, that you have not this principle, acknowledge it however to be a real thing; and that some persons have it, though you have it not. It is too common, when the clearness and force of the matter constrain an acknowledgment, that such a divine power does exist in the souls of men, for persons to satisfy themselves with this, that they are but as other men are; and to reckon theirs to be no worse, than that which is the common case of mankind. All that lies without their compass, or above and beyond their own perceptions, they take to be mere fancy and fiction; and every body is a hypocrite, or an enthusiast, that pretends to more than they find in themselves. But for what reason is all this? Or why must the experience of any such person be thought the standard of reality? that is, that nothing can be real but what they experience to be so, or exceeds the limits of their own perceptions. What! is it not apparent to every man, that there are far more considerable realities which we know not, than those which we do know? and is there no danger of coming under the character of speaking evil of those things which we know nothing of, which some were stigmatized with by the apostle Jude with so much severity? And I would fain have such consider with themselves, what expressions they find scattered up and down in the Holy Scriptures, of such a real thing as lively affections towards God, and a principle of living religion. Particularly I would recommend to their consideration such passages as these, "The Lord is my portion, the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage," Psalm xvi. 5, 6. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!" Psal. xlii. 1, 2. And again, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever," Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. When you meet with such expressions as these, I would ask you; Do you believe that the persons who used them were hypocrites or enthusiasts? that there was nothing in all this but fiction? And when, on one hand, we compare the internal living religion, suitable to the import of these devout expressions, with a mere external profession, joined with disobedience, and abominable practices, on the other hand; I would fain know, which of these two does best agree with the Gospel? which is most agreeable to the sacred records, in which these and other such like passages are to be found? And if you believe that there was really such a thing as a living religion in such persons as we are speaking of in ancient times, I would fain know why you, or any one else, should have such a bad opinion of the world as to think it is quite banished now from among us. For, to what end should the Gospel be continued in the world, if not to accomplish its own design? which is to work such a realizing apprehension of divine things in the minds of men, as to influence their practice and behaviour. Or does any one think, that religion is so altered in its nature and essence, as that what was religion in former ages, is not so now? Have we then, since those times, had a new way and method of attaining felicity prescribed to us? have we any later Gospel of divine authority, that teaches us that mere formalities will serve the turn? Where is that Gospel to be found?

3. Being then convinced of the reality of such a divine principle, endeavour to understand and seriously consider the necessity of it. Consider it as a thing that does not serve barely for convenience and ornament, but to answer the most absolute necessity of our souls, and the exigence of your own case.

4. Apprehend also the impossibility of attaining it your own selves; I mean this inward principle and power of religion; or by any unassisted endeavours of your own. For I pray consider, would you have a religion that should be your own or God's creature? A religion indeed that shall be of my own forming and contrivance, I can easily make myself accord to; but why should I ever hope that this should serve my turn, or do the work? or why should I think against plain experience and my Bible, that the most excellent part of religion should be within the compass of my own power to effect, and produce? Let us think how it is with us in other cases. It is you know within the compass of human power to shape a statue, or paint in colours the picture of a man; but when the artist has done all this, can he infuse a soul into that statue, or make that picture fit to reason and discourse? No: when he has done his utmost, it will be only a mere piece of ingenious contrivance, that looks specious to the eye, but has in itself nothing of sense, life, or motion; can do nothing like what it imitates, for still something within will be necessary. So in like manner I can externally shape myself like a Christian, but can I infuse the divine life into this external form? can I make myself to live, choose and delight, love and joy in God, as a Christian? It is therefore good for us to know the bounds of our own power; what it can, and what it cannot, do in this regard. And hereupon to prevent an objection, I add another direction: to wit,

5. Seek this principle and divine power were it is to be had, even of him who alone can give it. For it may be said perhaps, "If it be not within my compass to help myself, what have I to do but to sit still?" The case itself tells you what you must do. If you cannot help yourself in that which is absolutely necessary to your welfare, you are to go to God, from whom this assistance is to be had by fervent prayer. It is the common dictate of nature to all mankind, when once they apprehend a distress, to fly to heaven for help. Finally,

6. Use all the other means of obtaining this power, which are appointed for this purpose, designedly with a view to this great and important end. To read the Holy Scriptures, to hear sermons, to meditate upon what we read and hear, to confer with living Christians, such as evidently appear to have the power of religion, are the means I speak of; but we must regard them only as means, otherwise they may be used long, and the end of all be never brought about. It is one thing how other creatures attain their end, and how a reasonable creature reaches his. An arrow reaches its mark, without considering whither it goes; but do you think a reasonable being is to attain his end so?

No; his duty is to take that course, and use those means, that lead to his end, designedly, and on purpose to secure it. As for instance: there are many that join in the ordinance of Christian worship; but if I put the inquiry to myself, What do I do this for? and cannot answer, "I use such and such means on purpose for such ends, that I may have my soul furnished with internal religion, or the life of God;" I may call these the means of grace, but it is plain I do not understand the end thereof; nor use the means designedly for the attainment of this end. When a man finds his soul empty, and destitute of the power of godliness, or the internal living principle of religion, though he does the things which God hath appointed to be means for begetting such a principle, yet it is plain he never uses them as the means to this end. But if you purposely design, by attending upon God's solemn worship, to get this vital and internal principle of real piety, this may come to something in time; and in this way you are to wait, which is of divine appointment, till the desired end is effectually obtained. For always remember this; you are bound to God, but he is not bound to you. And now for the enforcement of all this, I shall add two or three motives, and so conclude.

(1.) If you come not to this, whatever you do, with relation to matters of a religious nature, you do under a force. There are many things, it may be, you abstain from, or practise; but it is all owing to a force put upon you, if this divine principle is wanting; which must needs make religion an uncomfortable service.

(2.) Religion is nothing in itself, when it is nothing else but mere profession. Alas! how inconsiderable a thing is it! a mere show! a vain shadow! And what can be expected from what has no more of substance in it, than such an empty profession? It will be of no avail. We read that, "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk and they see his shame," Rev. xvi. 15. Truly such a profession that has no bottom, nothing internal to correspond to it, is a garment that will not be kept; you will lose it; it will be blown away from you in an evil time: it is too short while you have it, and very soon you will cease to have it, when a time of difficulty comes, which you have reason to expect.

(3.) And lastly; to go on with such a profession without ever looking after the power of godliness, will not only come to nothing, but will most highly provoke Almighty God. For I pray consider, professing religion is assuming to yourselves the name of God; therefore to profess vainly, is to profane his sacred name. And do we not know, that the God whose name we assume is a jealous God? and that he will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain? Oh, how dreadful will the controversy be about this in the day of final account! But really there is reason to believe, that God has a controversy to manage with the Christian world before that day come: partly with those who corrupt and deprave the whole frame of the Christian institution itself; and partly with those who contradict the very design of it, in their lives and practice. And, oh! when God shall come to plead with such in this manner, "Why have you profaned such a divine religion as this? Why have you made the religion of Jesus seem to the world an impotent or ignominious thing? inasmuch, as you have formed it, it has made men no better than Turkism or paganism would have done!" how, I say, will this be answered in the great day? And in like manner, when God comes to plead his own cause against a hypocritical generation, who contented themselves with external forms and shadows, though they never so openly contradicted all that they pretended to in their behaviour; how will they be able to answer for themselves, or to justify their conduct?

Now that this may not be the case of any of us, God of his infinite mercy grant for the sake of our blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be given and ascribed all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

THE

LOVE OF GOD AND OUR BROTHER,

CONSIDERED IN SEVENTEEN SERMONS,

ON 1 JOHN IV. 20.

PREACHED AT A WEEKLY MORNING LECTURE AT CORDWAINER'S HALL,

IN THE YEAR 1676.

SERMON I.*

1 JOHN IV. 20, the latter part.

HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HATH SEEN, HOW CAN HE LOVE GOD WHOM HE HATH NOT SEEN?

The whole verse runs thus:

IF A MAN SAY, I LOVE GOD, AND HATETH HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR: FOR HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HATH SEEN, HOW CAN HE LOVE GOD WHOM HE HATH NOT SEEN?

My purpose at present is not to speak from these words either of love to God, or our brother, absolutely and singly; but comparatively only, according to that connexion which they have one with another; and the difference of the one from the other respecting their objects, as the object of the one is somewhat visible, and of the other somewhat invisible. There is one thing necessary to be premised to this intended discourse concerning the acceptation of love here, and it is this; that the apostle in this little tractate of love, as this epistle may for the most part be called, doth not design to treat of love as a philosopher, that is, to give us a precise formal notion of it; but to speak of it, with a latitude of sense; not so indeed as to exclude the formal notion of love as it is seated in the inner man, but so as to comprehend in it such apt expressions and actings of it, as according to the common sense of men were most agreeable and natural to it. And therefore speaking of love to God in chap. ii. ver. 5. he tells us, that "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected:" that is, the very perfection of the love of God stands in this, in keeping his word. So in chap. v. ver. 3. "This (saith he) is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." And speaking of the other branch of this love in chap. iii. ver. 17. he saith, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" The apostle calls this the love of God also; it being one and the same divine principle of love implanted by God himself, which spreads itself to several objects all under one and the same communication, as having more or less of the divine beauty and loveliness appearing in them.

So that if any one should go about here to play the sophister, and say, "Love is a thing, which hath its whole nature and residence in the inner man. Define it never so accurately, you will find it to be wholly and entirely seated there. Now therefore, since nothing can be denied of itself, let it be confined and shut up there never so closely, admit that no expression be made of it one way or another, yet I need not be solicitous on this account: for let me walk and do as I list, the love of God may be in me for all that; since love is such a thing, wherever it is, as must have its whole nature within one." To this the apostle would reply, No, I do not speak of love in so strict a sense. Love, as I intend it, is not to be taken so; or if it were, it must however be supposed to have that strength and vigour with it, as to enable it to be the governing principle of a man's life; to affect and influence his own soul; and so to run through the whole course of his daily practice. I speak of love according to what it virtually comprehends in it; namely, conformity to the will of God, and obedience to his laws whereby that will is made known. And thus love is elsewhere taken in Scripture also. Our Saviour you know gathers up our duty into love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself; upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. xxii. 37—40. The apostle also tells us, that "love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 10. Therefore love to God and our brother, in this place, must be taken for the summary or abridgment of our whole duty; an epitome of the two tables; a virtual comprehension of all we owe either to God or man, that is, universal holiness, and an entire obedience to the Divine will. But still in this system or collection of duties, love, strictly and formally taken, is to be considered as the primary and principal thing; as seated and enthroned in the heart and soul; and as the original principle, upon which all other duties do depend, and from whence they must proceed. The acceptation of love being thus settled, there are three things that I chiefly intend to show from this Scripture.

First, That there is a greater difficulty of living in the exercise of love to God than towards man, upon this account, that he is not the object of sight, as man is; and consequently, that the duties of the second table are, ac-

* Preached May 26th, 1676.

cording to this our present state of dependence on external sense, more easy and familiar to us than the duties of the first. Hence proceeds that general propensity, which it greatly concerns us to be aware of; to acquiesce and take up our rest in a fair, civil deportment among men, without ever being concerned to have our souls possessed with holy, lively, and powerful affections towards God.

SECONDLY, I shall show, that this impossibility of seeing God, doth not however excuse us from exercising love to him in this our present state. It is indeed one reason why he is actually so little loved in the world, but it is no sufficient excuse. For the impossibility of seeing God doth not render it impossible to love him, and to live in his love, while we are here in this world, dwelling in the flesh. And this also is plainly grounded in the text; for this vehement expostulation of the apostle, "If any man do not love his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" plainly supposes it to be an intolerable thing not to love God. And therefore hence he takes the advantage of enforcing the duty of loving our brother, because otherwise we should be convicted, and proved to be no lovers of God; taking it for granted, that this would be esteemed a most horrid thing, even at the very first sight. Otherwise his exhortation would have no force nor pungency in it; but would be flat, and insignificant. Therefore he plainly supposes here, that though God's not being the object of sight doth render the exercise of love to him, upon that account, more difficult; yet it doth not render it impossible, or the neglect of it at all excusable; but considers it as a thing to which men are most indispensably obliged. This therefore will be my second head to discourse upon from this Scripture. And then in the

THIRD place, My design is to show you the absurdity of their profession of love to God, who do not love their brother also; and how false and fulsome a thing it is for men to pretend to any thing of sanctity and religion, while they neglect the duties of the second table. Of these we shall speak in order, and begin now with the

FIRST observation, That the impossibility of seeing God renders the exercise of our love to him more difficult, than the exercise of it towards man whom we do see. In this doctrine there are two branches, which are to be distinctly considered.

I. That it is more difficult to love God than our brother.

II. That one great reason of it is, that we cannot see God, as we do our brother.

I. As to the former of these, that there is a greater difficulty in the exercise of love to God than to men, we may collect from the common observation of the world. For it is very plain and evident, that the common course and practice of men shows what is more easy to them, and what less; it plainly discovers which way they are most inclined. This is the thing, which I understand here by difficulty; and it answers the intent and force of the apostle's expression, "How can he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, love God whom he hath not seen?" This plainly must be understood in a relative sense, and have respect to some agent, and here must have reference to ourselves. It is less easy to us; that is, it is a thing which our nature in our present state doth less incline us to, actually to live in the exercise of love toward God, than towards men. And, I say, what men are more or less inclined to, is to be seen in their common course; and from the common observation of the state and posture of the world we may gather, that men in general are less inclined to love God, than one another. And though it be very true, there is too little of love, kindness, and mutual affection among men, and a great neglect of justice, common honesty, and the other duties of the second table, which love must be understood to comprehend; yet certainly the instances are not so rare of persons that are kind, courteous, affectionate, and well-humoured one to another, as of persons well-affected towards God. This is a thing which commands our assent even at the very first sight. Nay, further, though it is also no less true, that men are too much lovers of themselves, to the exclusion not only of God, but of men too; yet certainly there is more of love to men, than to God, prevailing in the world. And to make this out let us go to the usual evidences and expressions of love; such as mindfulness of others, trust in them, a readiness to be concerned for their interest, a studious care to please them, loving to converse with them, or seeking and being pleased with it, and the like. If we descend, I say, to the considerations of such evidences of love as these are, we shall find that man is generally better beloved than God is. And that this may gain the greater possession of our souls, let us a little consider these particular evidences of love; and then see whether men are not generally more beloved by one another, than God is by them; hereby we shall plainly see, what is most agreeable to their temper, and what not. And,

1. *Mindfulness*, or a kind remembrance of others, is a most natural evidence of love. But what! are men who transact affairs one with another, so apt to forget each other, as they are to forget God? It is given us as a common distinctive character of a wicked man, that he is one that hath not God in all his thoughts. For thus saith the Psalmist, "The wicked in the pride of his countenance," that is, his heart expressing itself in the haughtiness of his countenance, and his supercilious looks, "will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts," Ps. x. 4. And by the same divine penman a wicked man, and a forgetter of God, are used as exegetical expressions, Psal. ix. 17. But there is many a wicked man that will kindly remember his friends, his relations, even his very companions in wickedness. And if we demand an account of ourselves, do we not find it more easy and familiar to us to entertain thoughts concerning our friends, and relations, from day to day, than we do to think of God? Are we not also more inclined to love them than God? What we love we are not apt to forget. "The desire of our soul is to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name," Isa. xxvi. 8. Our love to thee, which naturally works by desire, will not let us forget thee; it is too deeply impressed and rooted in us ever to lose the remembrance of the object of our love. This is one thing that showeth, that God is a great deal less loved by men, than they are by one another. Again,

2. To be apt to *trust* in one another, is a very natural evidence and expression of love. Whom we hate, we cannot trust; whom we love entirely, we know not how to distrust. One of the characters of love is this, "It hopeth all things, it believeth all things:" (1 Cor. xiii. 7.) it abhors to entertain a jealous surmise of the person who is the object of it. Now let the matter be tried by this also, and how much more ready are men to trust to one another, than they are to trust to God! What is there so vain, so uncertain, so unstable, which they are not more forward to repose their trust in, than in him? Therefore, saith the apostle to Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded; nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God," 1 Tim. vi. 17. Which charge implies the propensity of men's minds, rather to trust in the most fugitive, uncertain, vanishing shadows, than in God himself. This is an argument, that he hath but little love among men; that he cannot be trusted; and that few will give him credit. But how safely and quietly do men repose a trust and confidence in one another? And indeed if faith and trust were not natural to man, there would be no such thing as commerce, which is the bond of human society. The world must dissolve and break up; all must live apart in dens, and caves, and wildernesses, and have nothing to do one with another, if they could not trust one another. Without mutual confidence, there would be an end of all traffic. But to this, human society shows there is a disposition; and you can easily find out persons, in whom you would as safely repose your trust and confidence, as in your own hearts. You can say, "I would put my life into such a man's hands, or whatever is most dear to me." And if that person should but promise to undertake an affair, saying, "I will do such a thing for you, trust me with it, leave it upon me;" you would be as quiet, as if you saw the business done and already effected. But how unapt are the hearts of men to trust in God! and this it is, that holds off the world from him. He hath sent the Gospel of peace and reconciliation to mankind, and therein declares the good tidings, how willing he is that the controversies should be taken up between men and himself; yet none will believe it, none think him in earnest, till he is pleased himself to draw them. "Who hath believed," saith the prophet, "our report? or to

whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isaiah liii. 1. Plainly intimating, that the arm of God must go forth to make a man believe him, and take his word. A strong argument, that he hath but little love among men, when he cannot be trusted; or, at least, when so few will give him credit!

3. A *readiness* to be concerned for one another's interest and reputation, is also a natural evidence of love. And we know how easily men are drawn in for one another, and take part with a neighbour, or a friend, when they are traduced, and evil spoken of; and especially when they see indignities and affronts put upon them. There is usually a great siding among persons upon such occasions. "Such a one has spoken ill of my friend, I must stand up for him to the uttermost. Another has injured him, purloined from him that which was his, and the like; I must right him." Should we not reckon him a base fellow, who should behold an act of stealing committed upon the estate of another, and not make a discovery of it, or endeavour to have him righted? But how little generally are men concerned for God, and his affairs! What robberies are every where committed against him, and yet how few do lay it to heart! How evil is he spoken of many times, and his truth, and his ways! But how few can say, "The reproaches wherewith they have reproached thee, have fallen upon me?" Ps. lxix. 9. It is true, this is the sense of David, when he cries out, "As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me, while they say unto me daily, Where is thy God?" Ps. xlii. 10. It is to me as if one was forcing a sword into my bones, even into my marrow; a most intolerable torment, to be upbraided in respect to my God: that he is either impotent, and cannot help me; or that he is false to me, and answereth not the trust I have reposed in him. But how few are there of David's mind in this case! How many oaths and blasphemies can they hear, wherein the sacred name of God is rent and torn, and yet their hearts are not pierced at all! Further,

4. An earnest study to *please* men is a natural expression of love. Now let the matter be estimated by this, how much less God is loved in the world than men. It is an ordinary thing with them to study to please one another, to humour one another. "Such and such things I do, and such I omit, lest I should displease a relation, a friend, or one that I have frequent occasion to converse with." But how few are the persons, who can say, "This I do purposely to please my God!" or with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" Gen. xxxix. 9. A man will oftentimes cross his own will, to comply with that of another; and reckon it a great piece of civility to recede from his own inclination in order to gratify another person, when he can do it without any great inconvenience. But how rare a thing is this with respect to God! To be able to say, "In such a thing I displease myself, that I may please God; I cross my own will, to comply with his." Among men there is especially one sort, that we are more concerned and obliged to please, as far as we can; and that is, such as rule over us. We are bound to please our superiors; and to obey them, that we may do so. And there is no obedience either to God or man, that is right in its own kind, but what proceeds from love, and is an evidence as well as an effect of it. "If ye love me," saith Christ, "keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. "And this is the love of God," saith St. John, "that we keep his word," 1 John v. 3. Moreover, the duties of the second table, which we owe to men, particularly that of obedience to superiors, are summed up all in love. The apostle having in the 13th chapter of this epistle to the Romans, pressed subjection to the higher powers, in that they are of God, adds in the 10th verse, that "to love one another is the fulfilling of the law." "Render," saith he, in the same discourse, "to all their dues: tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour," Rom. xiii. 7, 8. Yet observe, all is wrapt up in love; for the command is immediately after, "to owe no man any thing, but to love one another:" and in short there is nothing which love doth not comprehend, or to which it doth not incline us.

But however, though such obedience be due to our human superiors as proceedeth from love; yet how apparent is the case, that herein is greater love shown to men, than to God, though too little to both! There is indeed too little regard to laws both human and divine, in the most important matters; yet surely a great deal less to the latter than, to the former. The thing speaks itself as to common observation; and we daily see how much more human laws do influence men's practice, than those which are divine; and that persons that are a great deal more prone to be precisely observant of them about matters, which they themselves do otherwise count indifferent, than of the laws of God, which are about the most necessary matters, and which also are acknowledged as such. Thus it hath long apparently been in the Christian world. A greater account hath been made of this and that arbitrary circumstance, than of the substance of religion itself. More stress hath been put upon the cream, the salt, and the oil, and such additionals of human invention, than on the great obligations of the baptismal covenant. And if it were not so, it could never have been desired by any, that we should rather be all infidels, than not be Christians after their fashion, and in their way. For that it hath been evidently so, may be seen in this; that this whole nation itself hath at once suffered under the interdict of excommunication in former days. All the doors of our churches and chapels have been shut up, only for some non-compliance with this or that human addition; thus they choose we should rather be no Christians at all, than not have Christianity with those additions. This shows a greater disposition in the minds of men to obey human laws, in circumstantial matters; than divine laws, in those points which are most necessary and important.

What then is more apparent, than that God is less loved in the world than men are; since persons are more forward to show respect to them, than to him? Not but that we are bound to show respect to them too, especially to those who represent him, and as his vicegerents, rule over us. But surely it was never intended, that when we are to obey men for God's sake, we should regard him less; we should rather do it so much the more on this very account.

In a word, love ought to be an ingredient in every act of obedience; even to human government, as I have said before, as well as to that which is divine. What love is expressed in that great canon of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;" (Matt. vii. 12.) that is, you ought to judge the case thus; "What would I wish to be done to me in such a man's circumstances? Would not I expect to be obeyed and reverenced, if I were a magistrate? My love to myself would incline me to expect it. Therefore my own love to myself, being the measure of that love which I owe to another, should oblige me to show the same respect to him in his circumstances, that I would wish to be shown to me in the like circumstances." But here is the iniquity of the case: those whom we should honour and love in the Lord for his sake, men are apt to put the supreme respect upon; which is to dethrone the supreme Lord of all, and to set up his creature in his place. And as to other persons, who are not invested with power and authority over us; how many are there of those, who will not wrong men, or do them any injustice! How many that are most highly civil, and candid in their converse with them, and strictly careful not to disoblige them by their behaviour! But who sticks at disobliging God, or makes a difficulty of disobeying him? Again,

5. Towards men there is a disposition deeply to *regret* any offence we unwarily have given them. When we though undesignedly, have done another an injury; if, for instance, we but casually tread on his foot, or some such like matter, we presently say, "I am afraid I have hurt you, I am sorry for it." Common civility would oblige one to express such a regret. And if we by any rash word or weak action have trespassed upon another, we are reckoned almost unfit for society, if we do not show a sense of our having offended such person. Men that are not very ill-natured indeed, are apt to make apologies, and desire to be forgiven, in cases where they have offended through inadvertency. But how much is it otherwise with men towards God, who trespass upon him every day, and never cry to him for mercy! who wear away their lives, from one month, year, and day, to another, in continual devi-

ations from him, and rebellions against him, without its ever coming into their thoughts to say, "Lord, forgive me, that I have lived so long in the world, as it were, without thee! that I have carried it to thee as if I owed thee no duty nor service! Lord, I have offended, I desire to put an end to this course, and to do so no more." Finally,

6. A *love of* converse or delight in each other's company, is another expression of that regard which men have for one another. Man is naturally a sociable creature; and how few do you know, or ever have known, who do not affect company! Some few instances there are of persons, that are of a gloomy retired temper; but generally men seek to converse with one another, and take pleasure in it. But alas, how little do they care to converse with God! They had rather be any where, than in his presence. Many, otherwise ingenious persons, men of good dispositions and of facetious tempers, who, as they delight in converse themselves, so their conversation proves delightful to others; yet care not at what distance they keep themselves from God. How many, I say, of such ingenious persons do we know; who yet neglect to pray to God; take no pleasure in having any thing to do with him; take his holy name in vain; and set themselves at a distance from him, by their own evil practices? It may be they will come to the solemnities of public worship for the sake of order, and to express their respect to others; so that even in those things which are peculiarly appropriated to him, they show more respect to men, than to God. And how sociable soever their temper is one with another; yet with the Almighty they care not to converse at all, but say to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. From whence we may conclude, that to man in his present state, it is even natural to wish the great God out of being. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," Ps. xiv. 1. "I would there were no God; my vote shall go for it, that there were none; I could wish him out of the universe."[a] But you never heard of such a monster among men, as to wish there was no man beside himself. You never heard of such a hater of mankind, as to wish the whole human race into nothing.

Now all these things concur to evidence or prove to us, that God is much less beloved in the world, than men are by one another. And it must be allowed that the common practice of men showeth their inclination. This is discovered by constant experience and observation, and the very aspect of men's deportment doth represent this as the true state of things. And, as I observed before, men may find something of it by the experience they have of themselves; even those who have applied themselves to the business of religion, seriously and in good earnest. They find they can presently set their love on work towards this or that creature; but how long an exercise of the thoughts doth it require, and how great is the difficulty and toil, before the heart can be wrought up into a frame of actually loving God!

So that the former branch of this truth, that men are more inclinable to love one another, than they are to love God, is abundantly clear. The latter is, that it proceeds in a great measure from this cause, that God is not seen by us, as we are by one another; but this must be reserved for another discourse.

SERMON II.*

In my former discourse I told you, that my design from this scripture was not to handle singly and apart either the love of God, or of our brother; but to speak of them comparatively, with respect to the greater or less facility attending the exercise of the one or the other, according to their different objects; the object of the one being visible, and of the other, invisible.

The first observation raised from the words, after settling the acceptation of love, was this: That it is more difficult to live in the exercise of love to God, than towards men; because he is not the object of sight, as we are one to another. In which doctrine, as we observed, there are two things to be considered.

I. That it is more difficult to love God than our brother. This has been proved from experience, and the common observation of the world, in several particulars. The

II. Branch contained in this proposition, which we are now to speak to, is this; That one great reason of this difficulty is, that men cannot see God, whereas they do see one another. In the prosecuting of this part of my subject it will be more necessary to insist on the explication, than on the proof of it; and still more upon the application, than on either of the former. Something I shall endeavour to say to all, as the time shall allow.

For the explication of this matter, namely, How we are to understand, that the not seeing God as we do men, is a cause of its being more difficult to love him than it is to love them, take these few propositions. As,

1. That it is not an impossible thing in itself to love the unseen God: for if the not seeing him did make it impossible to love him, he could never be loved by any one; because he is seen by none with the bodily eye, as we see one another. But it is plainly implied in our text, that there are some that love God, notwithstanding his invisibility. And the apostle therefore endeavours only to evince the absurdity and guilt of not loving our brother, because from thence a man may be convicted of being no lover of God, which he accounts as a most intolerable thing. The not seeing him therefore doth not make it impossible to love God, but only renders it less easy. That is, it is not simply impossible, and therefore he who can do all possible things, can make the nature of man to love him; he, I say, can form the nature of man to the love of himself.

2. The not seeing of God cannot be understood to be a necessary cause of this sad thing. It is not such a cause as doth necessitate this evil and horrid effect. For that would be to reflect upon God, as if he had made a reasonable and intelligent creature, that was by the necessity of his nature prevented from loving him. This would be to suppose, that the seeing of God with the bodily eye, were necessary to the loving of him; which would make it altogether impossible that he should be loved by any of us at all, since he is visible to none. Nay, we might say further, he were never to be loved by any being, no not by himself, on the same grounds. The cause therefore of this difficulty is such as doth not necessitate the thing caused: for that indeed would imply that the nature of man is such as would never admit of his loving God, and so there would be a contradiction in men's very nature; to wit, that they should be capable of being blessed in him only, whom at the same time they are not capable of loving. For experience showeth, that there is nothing else in which we can be blessed; nothing below, or besides God. Therefore this would infer, that man must be a creature made on purpose for misery; for it is evident he can be happy in no creature; neither in God could he be happy, if it were simply impossible he should ever love him, which is to cast the whole matter upon God himself. For if this were the case, then a man might say, "God hath given me such a nature as renders it impossible for me even to exercise love towards him." But far be it from us that we should entertain such a thought of God! that he should make man, a creature endued with an intellectual mind, and yet not capable of loving him, who is the Author and Original of his life and being! This it were even horrid to think of. And again,

3. Nor hath this always been the cause of such an effect; for there are some that are actually brought to love God, though they never saw him in the sense we speak of, to wit, with the bodily eye. It was not so with man from the beginning, that because he could not see God, therefore he loved him not, or was for that reason the less inclined to love him. He was formed at first for the love of his Maker, so as to take the highest complacency in

a For it is in the Hebrew text: אמר נבל בלבו אין אלהים: that is, *The fool hath said in his heart, NO GOD.* And so it may as well be understood to signify the fool's wish, as his judgment. And this is the more likely to be the meaning; inasmuch as it is manifest, that this is not the speech of some particular persons, or of some rare instances of most monstrous horrid wickedness; but it is spoken of apostate man in general, concerning whom it is said in ver. 3. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one.

* Preached May first, 1678.

him, and to make him his supreme delight. Man, I say, was made thus upright; but he hath since been trying inventions, to see if he could be happy any other way, or upon other terms. And therefore since this is not the necessary, nor the constant, cause of such an effect as this, we must add,

4. That it cannot be a cause of itself alone, but must needs be a cause in conjunction with some other cause; by the intervention of some other thing, by the concurrence of which this sad effect is brought about. For if it be true, that there have been men who have loved God, though they never saw him with the bodily eye, there must be some other cause of the want of love to God in those persons who love him not, besides his invisibility. Because otherwise, since God was always invisible, and never seen with the bodily eye, it would necessarily follow that he could never have been loved at all. And hence again we may observe,

5. That the other cause therefore, which is considerable in this case, must needs be the degeneracy of man's nature. It is not to be imagined, that man in a state of integrity should be incapable of loving God further than he could see him; or that the sight of his eye should be the conductor of his affections, and of the motions of his soul, which is a reasonable intelligent spirit. But the nature of man is not now what it was. Certainly the case was better with him formerly, than it is now in this lapsed state, in which we must confess him to be; since there is so great an alteration in his very nature. This even the heathens themselves have seen, confessed, and lamented. I remember Plato brings in Socrates somewhere speaking to this sense, upon a supposition of the pre-existence of his soul: "There was a time, says he, when I could have seen, and did see, the *first beauty*, the highest and most perfect comeliness and loveliness; but now being subject to the body, all that impression is vanished and gone." And divers others have complained of that great darkness and ignorance which was in them; and of the bonds and chains that held their souls fast, so that they could not tell how to exercise the powers of them towards invisible things. It cannot be then, but the matter must be resolved into this; that if our not seeing God is the reason why he is so little loved, it is because our nature is grown so corrupt and degenerate, that what we see, takes with us most. And again,

6. We may add hereupon, that this degeneracy of the nature of man must needs stand very much in the depression of the mind, or intellectual powers, and the exaltation of sense. For the mind and the understanding, by the light which God had placed there, were to guide and govern the man; instead of which, sense usurped the throne, and took the government of him into its own hands. During the distraction and interruption of that order, which God had originally set between the superior and inferior powers of man's soul, sense, I say, usurped the throne, and took the government into its own hands, and man has ever since basely yielded, and subjected himself to its dominion, so that nothing moves him now but what is sensible. In this therefore the degeneracy of man very much consists, that sense dictates, and is become the governing principle of his life. And,

7. We add further, for of this more will be said when we come to the use or application, that the not seeing God can be only a temporary cause of our not loving him; inasmuch as it is only a cause, with the intervention or concurrence of another cause, I mean, the disturbance of that primitive order, which God had settled between one faculty and another, belonging to the nature of man. Our not seeing God could never have prevented us from loving him, if things had not been so deplorably out of course with us, or this confusion of order had never been brought in among us. Therefore this cause is only temporary, that is, so long as this great depravation of our nature doth prevail. But there are those, with whom it either doth not, or shall not, prevail always. There are some, blessed be God, in whom this distemper and disorder of the soul of man is cured. For God hath sent his Son, the Redeemer, into the world on purpose to undertake this cure, and to rectify and set things right in men's spirits. And "Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity,"[a] and therefore surely from this monstrous kind of iniquity, the most horrid of all the rest, to wit, that most unrighteous, unequal thing, that man should not love his own Original, and the Author of his life and being. Therefore it was the resolution of the Redeemer, "I will die, but I will remedy this matter. I will give myself, I will sacrifice all that I have, but I will bring this matter to rights again." I say that it is only a temporary cause, which has been assigned of men's not loving God, subsisting only so long as man's nature continues depraved: which is not only curable, but in part is actually cured, when the work of regeneration is set on foot, and the Spirit of the Redeemer has begun to obtain in the soul; and it is completely cured, when the new creature becomes mature, and is risen up to its full growth and perfection. But in the mean time, so long as this distemper in the nature of man continues, our not seeing God is one great reason why we love him not. For that way of apprehending God, which should be the same with respect to invisible objects, that sight is with respect to those which are visible, is wanting. And this apprehension will still be wanting, that must supply the room of sight, so long as this degeneracy remains in us. While it is thus with us, that we are subject to the power of sense which has usurped the throne, the soul is destitute of those clear conceptions, those lively and vivid apprehensions, that issue in love to God. And so the great neglects of God, and the intolerable disrespect and affronts that are put upon him in the world, are, in a great measure, according to the present degenerate state of man, to be resolved into this cause, namely, that he is not seen. Hence it is, that so many persons neither love, nor regard him at all.

Having thus explained the point we are upon, I now proceed to evince this truth, that one great reason why men are not so apt to love God as they are one another, is because he is not the object of sight as we are. And this I shall do from the following considerations, namely,—that the object is certainly such as would command our love, if it could be apprehended aright; and—if it be not so, it must proceed from some defect in ourselves.

1. That the object is certainly such as would command our love, if it were rightly apprehended. For he is most amiable in himself; and has infinitely more obliged man, than they can ever oblige one another.

God, I say, is most amiable in himself, who is chiefly to be loved by all, though he is not actually so; as he is confessed to be the supreme object of our understanding, while in reality he is least known. "God is light,"[b] says the apostle in one place of this epistle; and "God is love,"[c] as he affirms in two others; a being of pure light and glorious love. Would he not be loved therefore, if apprehended aright? "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods!" as we find Moses speaking with admiration, "Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"[d] God is a Being wherein the most perfect wisdom, goodness, power, truth, and righteousness, make so admirable a temperature, that it is not possible he should not be loved, if he were but known.

Besides, he has infinitely more obliged men than they ever have or can oblige one another. Take any man whatsoever, whose soul you may suppose to be utterly destitute of the love of God, how low and abject soever be his state, yet you may say, "Thou impious wretch! thou hast not the love of God in thee; though he hath done more for thee, than all the men in the world whatever could do, even though they should all join together to oblige thee. For is he not the Author of thy life and being? Could the invention of all the men in the world have formed such a creature as thou art out of nothing? Is he not a continual spring of life to thee? Thou livest and movest, and hast thy being in him every moment. And it is with this design, that God doth continue to thee thy breath and being, that thou mightest feel after him, though thou canst not see him, and also labour to find him, though he be not far from every one of us. Thou art his offspring, as even heathen poets tell us:[e] no creature could ever have made thee. No man is always doing thee good every moment, and at all times; but thou art continually sustained by the Divine hand. The great God who made thee, feeds thee

a Tit. ii. 14. b 1 John i. 5. c 1 John iv. 16. d Exod. xv. 11. e See Acts xvii. 27, 28.

with breath from moment to moment, and is always exercising towards thee sparing and sustaining mercy; for his patience and bounty always concur together, in every moment's addition to thy breath." It were altogether impossible then but that God should be loved, more than all other beings, if he were but known. And then,

2. Since an object so excellent in himself, and beneficent towards us, must have been loved by us, if there were not some defect in ourselves, therefore it plainly appears that there is a defect; and it is owing to this, that sense has got dominion over us, and the ruling sway within us. For if he be not loved by any one, it must proceed from hence, that those lively apprehensions are wanting, which sense is the instrument of with reference to visible objects. This is in itself most plain, that such an object as the blessed God is, could not but attract our love, if there were not some great defect in ourselves, or if sense had not the power and dominion over us. And that it has such power and dominion, may be seen by comparing these two things together: to wit, that generally the objects of sense do make great impressions upon us; but the things that fall not within the reach thereof, or exceed its sphere, usually make little, or none at all.

The things of sense, I say, in the first place do usually make a great impression upon us, and are the things that have the deepest influence and operation upon the minds of men, so long as they are destitute of the grace of God. Hence it is, that men, who are yet in an unregenerate state, are said to be "in the flesh."[f] And a wicked man is spoken of as one, that is lost in the flesh: so that there is nothing comes near him, nothing affects the soul, nothing reacheth his heart, but what some way or other doth slide in upon him, through the mediation of his external senses. It is true, sense is the instrument of conveying to us the knowledge of many things that are not the objects thereof. But when any are spoken of under this character, of being in the flesh, it bespeaks the degeneracy of man while unrenewed to be so great, that he is a creature so wrapt up in the flesh, as that nothing can come at him, but what is sensible. And therefore of such persons it is said, "They savour the things of the flesh."[g] While this is the state and case of any man, it is no wonder that things, which are not the objects of sight, should move his heart but little. It is evident to all that make any observations upon themselves, how mighty a power sensible things have upon them. A danger that we see, how do we start at it? Without using any intervening thoughts, as soon as we see it we dread it. How apt are we also to be amused, by the variety of sensible objects! how apt to be ensnared and enticed by them! Therefore such as have a due care of themselves, what a watch and guard do they set upon their senses? For this purpose holy Job is said to "make a covenant with his eyes."[h] And we also read of a heathen philosopher, that would outdo Job, by putting out his eyes, that he might be able to contemplate the better; acting herein agreeably to this Arabian proverb, Shut the windows, that the house may be light. Thus it is evident how great a power sense has over us, to draw us this way and that. And,

On the other hand, it is also obvious to experience, how little power, in general, those things have usually over us which fall not under the senses. Not only the objects of our love, but of our other affections, signify nothing, make no impression, if they be invisible. Therefore it is spoken of as a characteristical note of the saints, that "they look not at the things that are seen, which are but temporal, but at the things that are not seen, and are eternal."[i] We read particularly of Noah, who "being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, and through faith prepared an ark for the saving of his house."[k] Do but consider; here was one man, and only one in a whole world, that was actually moved by the discovery and report of things not seen as yet, who when he was warned by God of such and such things coming, though unseen at present, admitted into his soul a pious preventing fear. I say there seems to have been but one such man in a whole world, and he is thereupon recorded with honour in the book of God for it. So rare a thing is it that a man should be influenced by things not subject to sight, that if there be but one Noah, any one such person in the world, Record him for it (saith God) to future ages, for his excellency in this, that he took notice of the monition, or warning from God, as to things not seen as yet, so as to do what was agreeable to the exigence of the case. Accordingly he stands at this day as an eminent example to all succeeding ages. And you find, that it is the same faith which distinguisheth those who belong to God, and is the principal rule of their life; to wit, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."[l] Plain therefore and visible it is to us, and so it must be to all the world, that most persons are governed by their senses; while things not sensible never move, nor signify any thing with us. How plainly doth experience every day speak in this case! When we tell men of a judgment to come, a dreadful tribunal where they must all appear, and an endless state of things, that is before them; we are to them as men that mock. They cry out, "Surely you are but in jest; you mean not as you say, when you tell us of such dreadful things; we see nothing like it, nothing tending that way." Thus in like manner it is said, that when the inhabitants of Sodom were admonished by Lot, that fire and brimstone were ready to come down upon their heads to punish the most flagitious enormities of that people, "he was to them as one that mocked."[m] So we are told this will be the language of scoffers in the latter days, "Where is the promise of his coming?"[n] As much as to say, "You have told us often of the great and terrible day, when the sign of the Son of man shall be seen in the heavens, and that there shall be most terrible concomitants of his appearance; but we see nothing like it, no token of its approach, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Thus the judgment of sinners is framed only by what is seen; and what is not seen, is not at all minded; not regarded by them. So David says, "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God," Ps. lv. 19. They say, "All things are as they were. There is no alteration fallen out so important, as seems to portend such dreadful things as you talk of. The sun runs its course as it has been wont, and there is the same succession of day and night, summer and winter, as in former times. Who therefore can make us believe, that there is such a day coming as that which is so much talked of?"

Now, since we find that God is such a one as you have heard; namely, most amiable in himself, and beneficent towards us, and consequently that he would most certainly be beloved, if there were not some great defect in us which hinders so blessed an effect; and since we find, that there is such a defect, that we have promoted sense to be the ruler in us, and that sensible things make a deep impression on us, while things that are not subject to the senses have little or no regard from us; we have all the reason in the world to conclude, that the great reason why men love not God is, because they do not see him. He is out of sight, and they regard him not.

I thought to have insisted on many things by way of use, as I proposed, after having explained, and evinced, this second branch of my first proposition; but I shall now only hint at some things, which I purpose to speak more largely to in the next discourse.

In the first place, we may infer and gather from hence, that the apostacy and degeneracy in which this world has been and is still involved, is very dreadful; in that it hath destroyed man's right disposition towards God. If it had wrought only so far as to deface men's limbs, and turn them into monstrous shapes, it had not been by many degrees so tremendous; but it hath deformed the mind, and spoiled the temper of the spirit as it hath reference to God most of all, which is a thing never enough to be deplored.

Again, we may further infer, that there is a necessity for something or other to supply the room of our not seeing God, as man did in the state of innocence; inasmuch as he is not seen by us now in this lapsed state, so as to furnish us with such apprehensions of him as to engage us to love him. There must be something analogous to sight, some communications of God's grace, that must influence our hearts to love him; without which it is impossible.

f Rom. vii. 5. g Rom. viii. 5. h Job xxxi. 1. i 2 Cor. iv. 18. k Heb. xi. 7. l Heb. xi. 1. m Gen. xix. 14. n 2 Pet. iii. 4

Moreover, I would observe that it is a wonderful mercy that God hath not wholly concealed himself from men; that though he cannot be seen by the bodily eye, yet he hath vouchsafed to show us, how we may attain to the knowledge of him. No man, saith John the Baptist, hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him, John i. 18. How then ought Divine grace to be admired for this!

We may also hereupon see the great necessity of much Gospel preaching, and that very lively and serious too. There are a great many that are apt to say, "What needs such ado? why must we have sermons so often?" Surely the exigence of the state of man is but little considered by them that say so. Do not we need to be often put in mind of the invisible God, when men love him not, because they see him not? If they should hear of him neither, what would become of them? Certainly they misunderstand the state of things among us, who think every little in this kind is too much.

Finally, we may see how little reason we have to be in love with this state of dependence upon sense, which amuseth our souls, usurpeth the power over them, and so disturbs and muddles our minds as to divert them from their true objects. How little reason have we to be fond of living in and walking after the flesh; which is to live the life of a creature, as it were, buried alive. Surely, I say, we have no reason to be fond of such a life.

SERMON III.*

HAVING told you in the introduction to the first discourse, that love to God and man is the summary of our whole duty, I proposed to insist on these three things.

FIRST, that there is a greater difficulty of living in the exercise of love towards God than towards men on this account, that he is not the object of sight, as man is; or, in other words, men are much more disposed to love one another, rather than God, inasmuch as they can see each other.

SECONDLY, that although this is one great reason why men in reality love God so little, yet it is no excuse.

THIRDLY, I proposed also to show you the manifest falsehood and absurdity of any one's pretending to love God, who does not love his brother also. The first of these we have made some progress in, and in the handling of it, told you, that it contained these two parts:

I. That it is more difficult to love God than our brother.

II. That one great reason of it is, that we cannot see God as we do one another.

As to the former of these, we have shown you in several particulars, that how much soever mutual love is wanting in the world; yet it is not so hard a matter to find out instances of kind, good natured men, who are friendly and fair in their deportment one to another, as it is to find persons who are kindly affected towards God. In the prosecution of this matter, the usual expressions or evidences of human love were considered. Such as mindfulness, or a kind remembrance of one another; mutual trust; a readiness to be concerned for each other's interest, and reputation; an earnest study to please, and oblige; and a disposition deeply to regret an offence, though given unwarily; and finally, a love of converse, or delighting in each other's society, is another expression as we observed, of that regard, which several persons have for one another. In all which respects it appears from constant observation and experience, that men are more disposed to show love and respect to one another than to God.

As to the latter of these propositions, that all this proceeds for the most part from this cause, namely, that God is not seen by men as they are seen by one another, several propositions were first laid down for the explication of this point; and then two considerations for the eviction of it, tending to show, that it must necessarily be from some great defect in the nature of man, that the most excellent and most amiable object of all others, should not be generally loved by us. After which, two or three hints by way of use were given you, and so we concluded the last exercise on this subject.

I now proceed to a larger and more close application of this important truth.

1. Hence we infer, that man is in a very low and lapsed state. The present state of man, I say, is a lapsed state. He is fallen, and fallen very low indeed, when this is the case with him, that he is less apt to love God than man; and only for this reason, because he cannot see God. It argues, I say, man to be sunk very low, and greatly fallen. And can we hereupon think otherwise? For what! can it ever enter into the imagination of any of us, that God did ever create such a thing as the reasonable intelligent spirit of man, his own offspring, image, and glory, with an original indisposition to the love of himself? Do we think that God gave such a nature to man at first, as was capable of being employed about spiritual objects, and yet with this strange defect or flaw in it, that it should be impossible to this nature of man to love the Author of itself, and the Original of its own life and being? This cannot be. It can never be, that a reasonable spirit, the immediate issue of the great Father of spirits, should be so alienated from its own Father; and that it should be so dependent upon sense, as not to be able to love him from whom it came, or any thing which is above the sphere of that base principle, which now presumes to give laws to the immortal mind. It is not to be supposed, that God ever created man so, as that his invisibility, which is the excellency of his own being, should be the reason why man should not love him. For he is therefore invisible, because he is excellent. And to think that the nature of man at first was so formed, that the excellency of things should be the reason why they should not be loved, and his own excellence a reason for his creature not to love him, is too absurd for any rational person to imagine. It is therefore plain, that the present state of man is a very lapsed state.

Some of the heathen, as we observed before, have acknowledged and lamented this. We find one of them complaining, that the darkness of ignorance clouded his mind, and that this body and flesh was but as a living sepulchre to the man. Another complains of certain bonds and chains, that tied down the mind of man to the body, and the things of sense. And a third speaking of the excellent state of man at first, says, that he then lived in a sort of familiarity and converse with God, but that now it was become quite otherwise with him. Such things as these we find in the writings of divers of the heathen. And how incongruous a thing is it for us, who have all the concerns of our souls, and what relates to our being so expressly discovered and made known to us; how incongruous a thing is it, I say, that such a malady as this should be so little minded as it is by us! Many have very slight notions of the degeneracy of man, and make a little matter of it, and the most have a much slighter sense thereof in practice. How few are there, who carry it as those who apprehend themselves fallen, and cast down from great excellencies! fallen short, very far short, of the glory of God! We live as if we apprehended no such malady, as if we knew not that there was a disease or distemper inwrought into our natures. Oh, how little is there of the sense of this to be found in the bulk of mankind! And hence I would further infer,

2. That this depravity or lapsedness of the nature of man consists greatly, in the depression and declination of his mind, and intellectual powers, as to the particular work and office of guiding his passions, his affections, and practical inclinations. This was just mentioned before in the last discourse,[a] but shall now be more largely considered. I do not say, with some, that this is all that is meant by the corrupt state of man; but certainly it stands very much in this, that his mind and rational powers are become unfit

* Preached September 8th, 1678.

N. B. The author begins the third sermon on this subject after the following manner:

"It will be necessary, after so long an interval, to be somewhat larger than usual in the recollection of what has been said from this scripture." And accordingly he proceeds to give a large recapitulation of the two former discourses, which he had preached about three months before; of which this is only an abstract.

There is a like interval or chasm, with respect to time, between the VIII. and IX. of those posthumous sermons, published by Dr. Evans; and there are several more of the like nature in the manuscript volumes, out of which these discourses are selected.

[a] See Prop. 6. p. 664.

for their proper business; and, that sense hath got the throne, usurped the reins, and governs his passions and affections. Herein, I say, consists, in very great part, the corruption and depravedness of man's present state. And do not we find it to be so? Do not we see, as to the objects that draw men's affections daily into a certain course, that it is not the mind, but sense, which prescribes? Sense dictates and says, "Love here," and they do accordingly: "Love not there," and they obey. "Let that be the object of your love, which sense tells you is amiable and lovely; and that which sense says no such thing about, you may slight, neglect, and take no further notice of." Thus men are dictated to, and they do accordingly. It is plain then, that the depravedness of man's state stands chiefly in this, that sense takes upon itself to do the business of the mind and intellectual powers, and we consent it should be so.

But is not this a dismal thing? more dismal that it is not laid to heart! Is it not a dismal thing, I say, that the first rank and order of creatures in this sublunary world should be sunk into that low bestial life, so as to be governed by no higher a principle than what is common to them with brutes; and that the incongruity of this should not be reflected upon, and more deeply considered? that men should so seldom consider with themselves the unfitness of their course, or labour to shake off the usurped dominion over them? This, I say, is most sad and doleful to think on, that matters should have gone on thus from age to age, and from generation to generation, in so many successions to this day, and we have heard of so few in all that time, who have regretted to be so imposed upon, and forborne to live the life of beasts and brute creatures through so many ages! One would think it should some time or other have come into the mind of man, to think thus with himself. "What! is it a becoming thing for me, a reasonable and intelligent creature, one formed after the image and likeness of God, one of those creatures made at first for his immediate service and fellowship, that I must now be imposed upon and dictated to by sense; that vile and base principle of sense, so as to love nothing but what that counts lovely, and neglect every thing which that takes no cognizance or notice of?" It is an amazing thing, that there should not be so much apprehensiveness left among men, as to remember, that they were men, in their original, once at least that they were men. "Remember," saith the prophet in a like case, "and show yourselves men," Isa. xlvi. 8. But alas, how little is there left of a sense of this degeneracy among us! how little resentment of the vile indignity that is done to the whole kind, and which the whole species of men have suffered to come upon them! to be degraded and brought down into an inferior rank and order! to do, to act, and live, as if they were also made to die like the beasts that perish!

There are indeed many, in the mean time, who proudly arrogate and give to man that which belongs not to him in his present condition, and which this state does not admit of. They say him to be that which he is not, but in the mean time really see not, nor lament, that he is neither what he was, or what he should or ought to be. And to how little purpose is it to magnify human power, when it is manifest how forlorn the present state of man is! He is fallen very low! And what are these men intent upon, who make it their business now to magnify the nature and power of man in this condition? those parasites of mankind as I may call them, what mean they by it? When he is become a lost perishing creature they adorn him with shadows, and think they make up the matter by attiring him with magnificent titles and attributes. As if when a person is condemned to suffer the execution of the sentence of death passed upon him, one should clothe him with a majestic robe, and bestow great compliments upon him. This is to add scorn to his ruin, and is only insulting over the wretchedness and calamity of the man's condition. And yet this is the course of them that go about to persuade man, that although the case is thus with him, he can recover his own excellence that he hath lost; that he can anew create himself, or repair the ruins of his decayed and shattered state. This is the way to add incurableness to his misery, by tempting him to neglect the only means of taking it off; and so make him miserable without remedy. But that persons out of a deep concern for the honour and glory of man as the top of the creation, should go about to make him believe himself now in an honourable state, and that he can even now do great things; how unsuitable and insignificant is this, as well as inconsistent with truth! And again, we,

3. Infer hence, that man is most especially prejudiced and impaired by his lapse or fall, in respect to his disposition and inclinations towards God. The wound is principally in his mind, and consists in the depression and enfeebling of its powers; but the mind itself is most especially hurt and impaired in respect of those inclinations by which it should be guided towards God. For in the state in which he is at present he is indisposed to the love of God; and for this mean reason, because he cannot see him. And that he is not able to love what he cannot see, shows him to be a very mean, abject creature, and that his powers are mightily impaired. Surely the time was, that he could have loved what he could not have seen with his bodily eye; and how comes it to pass that because he cannot see God, therefore he cannot love him? This shows that his mind is impaired, that he is hurt chiefly in what respects his Creator; and that his propensity, the bent and bias of his spirit, towards God, is lost.

This is a sad and dismal thing that is befallen the nature of man; because God is far beyond the reach of his sight, and he himself is sunk into flesh, lost in earth, and always imposed upon by sense, he cannot see him, cannot lift up the dull heavy eye of his mind to his God, which is the eye he must be seen with by his creatures. So that, as the apostle Paul expresses it, he is become alienated from the life of God, and without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. And how much is this to be lamented, that man is so fallen off from God! that his original propensity to him is lost and dropped from his nature! If we had heard but of one man since the creation of the world with whom this was the case, it would deserve to be very much lamented. But that this should come upon the whole kind, that it should be thus, as I may speak, with the whole race of men: methinks the sense of it should never wear off from our hearts. Strange! that it should be the course and fashion of this world all over the earth, to live in an oblivion of him that made us, and with hearts devoid of his love, and only because he is so excellent as not to be seen by us with the bodily eye! It was reckoned a sad and terrible day, when a tribe was cut off from Israel; but if we consider what man was made for, what were the design and end of his creation, we see as it were a whole race of beings lost from the creation of God. For what can we think man was made for, but to love, admire, triumph, and glory in his great Maker? But to all this he is lost; and abstracting what is done in order to the recovering him again, it had been as well if there had been no men at all, and for themselves unspeakably better. How strange then is it, that such a matter as this is, should ever escape our thoughts! If we speak of the corruption and depravedness of human nature, they are words of course that drop from us now and then, and some slight notions of the matter hover in our minds; but how few are there to whom it is a familiar thing to roll themselves in the dust before the Lord, in the sense of that vile and abject state, which man in common now is in! How few lament that they are by the fall cut off from God; and spoiled as to all their capacities, whereby they were suited to the Divine love, service, and communion! and yet the most tragical calamities that could possibly have fallen out in this world, or of which we could form any imagination, had been nothing in comparison of this. Nay, if all mankind, as to shape, or impossibility of external enjoyments, were the most monstrous and most miserable creatures living, it were nothing when compared to the mischief and misery which are the fruits of man's apostacy from his Maker.

4. We further infer hence, that man upon all these accounts must necessarily be at a very great distance from true blessedness. Whoever understands or considers the connexion between blessedness and love, will soon perceive the reasonableness of this inference. It is impossible to be blessed without love; and it is necessary to every one's satisfaction, that it be a full and sufficient good that is the object of his love. If either of these be wanting, it

is impossible it should be satisfying, or a suitable good to me. Or if, on the other hand, there be a good never so self-sufficient or all-sufficient, yet if I cannot love it, if my heart be averse to it, this also is a sufficient bar to my happiness. The things that are seen, though a man love them never so much, can never satisfy, because they are not sufficient. The infinite incomprehended good is all-sufficient, and fit for every purpose; but this cannot make him happy, because he doth not love it. In the creature therefore man cannot be happy; in God he will not. He cannot in the creature, because that hath not in itself to give; in God he will not, because his heart is disinclined to him, and will not be brought to a closure with him by love.

Consider man according to this state of his case, and you must look upon him as one, who by his very constitution and present temper of his soul, is formed for misery; I say, so long as he continues in his present situation. His heart inclines him truly to visible things, and to love the objects of sense, which can never make him happy. The good that is unseen hath enough in it to make him blessed, but then he will not love it. He will not apply himself to love God, merely because he is out of sight. You must needs think then that it is a great thing that must work the cure of man, who is thus involved in so great an abyss of depravedness and misery. And therefore I must add,

5. There is a very great necessity of much Gospel preaching in order to persuade men to the love of God. For what is the design of the Gospel, but to render God amiable to men? What is it but a method of rendering God lovely, and of restoring men's love to God? And since his loveliness is not the object of sight, there needs such a supplemental representation of himself, to supply the want of vision. And since the things that court our senses are obvious, and occur to us every day, yea every hour of the day, it is needful that we should be frequently put in mind of God; and that those discoveries of him which tend to beget the love of him in our hearts, should be very much urged and inculcated upon us. For otherwise what shall countervail sense, or what shall we set against the sight of our own eyes? "No man hath seen God at any time," John i. 18. What is it then that must supply that defect, and be in the stead of the sight of God to us? Why, "the only-begotten Son of God, he hath declared him." So that we have now a revelation of God himself. And our Lord Jesus Christ, who lay in his bosom, and came from thence to declare the Father to the world, has ordained that this revelation, of which he is the prime Author, shall be held out before us from time to time, by the use of inferior and subservient instruments.

I have often considered the strange prevarication, and sophistry, which some men use in stating things that are necessary to salvation; and the use they make of that state. That is, because they can make a shift to gather up the main principles of religion into a little compass, as they may very easily, they say, "Here is all that is necessary to salvation. And therefore since in that way, or in that church, all things necessary to salvation are taught, what need is there of any more? why should not we come over thither? or why should we separate from it?" Methinks it were an obvious easy thing to most people to detect the fallacy. They state what is objectively necessary to salvation, without considering the condition of the subject, and what is necessary for that subject. That is, they state what is necessary to be known and believed in order to our being saved, but consider not what is necessary to bring men to this knowledge and belief of these necessary things, so as to make a due impression of them upon their hearts. If, for instance, you were to prescribe to a sick languishing person a remedy for the taking off his distemper: would you only tell him of such and such good substantial food that you would have him eat? and would you then think you had done the business? Alas! the poor man is sick; he desires nothing, can take nothing, can digest nothing, and casts up all you give him. Why then do you talk to him of such things as will make wholesome and substantial food, when he can neither receive nor retain it? So in like manner in the present case and exigence of man, considered as a fallen creature, if the bare proposal of the sundry heads of religion, necessary to be known and believed, were sufficient; then to have a sermon once in a man's life-time might do the business; or a mere system of the principal parts of the Christian religion would do what it is urged for, and answer the exigence of the case. This I say, were a thing easily to be granted, if it were really so with men, that a doctrine would be understood as soon as proposed, and received when understood, and so beget its due and proper impression upon the hearts of men. But truly the case is manifestly otherwise, since man is fallen into so depraved a state. And to talk thus, is to speak of a scheme of divinity suitable only to innocent men in paradise; when no more was needful to be done than barely to propound things with respect to the clearness of the understanding, the rectitude of the will, the agreeableness of the powers one to another, tog ther with the truth and goodness of their objects. But to say that this is all that is requisite, that there is enough held forth or laid before men, the knowledge and belief of which is sufficient to save them, is just as if one should say, that such and such things proposed to a sick man would do him good if he were not sick. So in like manner this way of propounding the Gospel would serve the turn for men, if they were such as when they were at first created. Indeed it were no Gospel, if it were only enough to save men from sin, who as yet were no sinners. The very notion implies a contradiction. For doth not the same sin which makes them stand in need of a Gospel for the reconciling them to God, disaffect at the same time their hearts unto God, and make them unwilling to close with him? Therefore they need to have precept upon precept, and line upon line; here a little, and there a little. And they that preach the Gospel to men, are urged "to be instant in season and out of season, to admonish, exhort, reprove;" (2 Tim. iv. 2.) and all little enough, indeed all too little.

Surely then there is somewhat else to be considered in the matter. When we consider what is objectively necessary, it is also to be considered what will bring men to believe these necessary things. And in order to that there is need of their being frequently inculcated, inasmuch as things that are seen are more the objects of our love, than the things which are not seen; and what we ought to set our hearts most upon, are out of sight. God himself is the great Object men are to be directed to, and to whom they must be united; or they are lost. He is invisible, and they are apt, as you have heard again and again, to mind nothing but what is seen. Therefore it is a strange unapprehensiveness of the real state and condition of mankind, which those are guilty of, who decry preaching as a needless thing. Surely they that do so, have little studied the nature of man!—There are several other things that remain to be spoken to, which I cannot insist upon at this time.

SERMON IV.*

WE have gone through the first part of my design from these words, which was to show, that men are less apt or disposed to the exercise of love to God than to one another. And we have made some progress in the application, by way of inference; and therein have endeavoured to show, —that the indisposition of man to the love of God is a proof of his being in a lapsed and very degenerate condition —that this degeneracy must consist principally in the depression of the mind and its intellectual powers—that more especially man is prejudiced by the lapse or fall with respect to his inclinations towards God—that in consequence of this, he must needs be at a great distance from true blessedness, which is inseparably connected with the love of God—and in the next place, it is further inferred, that there is great occasion for frequent Gospel preaching, which is the method instituted by Christ for restoring and reviving love to God in the souls of men. But though this is necessary, yet we are also to know that it is not sufficient; for all the preaching in the world cannot alone make the sensual heart of man to love God. And therefore we proceed to infer further,

* Preached September 19th, 1678.

6. That since men are so very unapt to love God, and for this reason, because they see him not; there is great need of the communication and influence of that glorious and mighty Spirit of life to relieve him in this sad extremity and distress. For surely it is a very distressed case, that man cannot love his own Maker, the Author of his life and being, him in whom is his eternal hope, and all because he cannot see him. It is a case that calls for a very great and powerful hand to redress; and no other hand is proportionable to the exigence thereof. Though he works by means, and even by that of the Gospel revelation, yet it doth not follow that the means will do the business alone; but the contrary follows, that because they are means, therefore there must be an agent, and an efficient to use them, and one proportionable to the work of forming and disposing the spirits of men towards God, that they may be capable of his love, and admit it into their hearts so as to rule and govern there. And what can do this but the Spirit of God? What else is it that can awaken and rouse the dull, sluggish, drowsy spirits of men? What else, I say, can quicken, purify, and refine spirits lost in pleasure and sense? The way of bringing any soul to love God, is to give it the spirit of love. There is no other way of doing it. Now the apostle says, that "God hath given to us not the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7. One and the same Spirit is all these at once. And till that Spirit is given us, there is nothing but enmity and disaffection towards God; there is nothing but feebleness and impotence, as to any thing that is good; there is nothing but distemperature and diseasedness in man, which have pierced him to the very heart. This Spirit therefore, in reference to these several exigencies, is a Spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind. That same Spirit that makes the soul capable now of doing things that require power; that same Spirit that rectifies the mind, and heals it of those distempers under which it was wasting and consuming before, is a SPIRIT OF LOVE. It is said to be a Spirit given, a Spirit superadded to our own, a Spirit that we had not before. Indeed it must be some other spirit than ours, which must render us capable of loving God.

You know, that the apostle, recounting the several fruits of the Spirit, (as he had done those of the flesh before,) sets this of love in the front of them. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," &c. Gal. v. 22. And after telling us, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;" (1 Cor. ii. 9.) he tells us also of a Spirit different from that of the world, the Spirit which is of God, which such as they had received. "We have received," says he, "not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12. And in this same chapter, wherein is our text, you have the apostle John speaking to this very case, to wit, the impossibility of our seeing God: "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit," 1 John iv. 12, 13. Love to one another as Christians or saints, is also a fruit of that same blessed Spirit. And if there be such a principle of love within us, it plainly speaks that God dwells in us, and we in him, and that he hath planted his own love in our souls, which is perfecting there. It is manifest now that he hath taken possession of us, and drawn us into union with himself, so as to become the great Fountain of that principle of love in us, whereby we are capable of loving him, and loving such as are his, for his sake.

And because the act of the heart in loving supposes some foregoing act of the mind by which the object is perceived to be lovely, therefore this same Spirit is elsewhere called a "Spirit of wisdom, and revelation, in the knowledge of him," (Ephes. i. 17.) whom we are to love. The apostle is there praying earnestly on behalf of the Ephesians, that this Spirit might be given them, by which they might be capable of knowing, and knowing practically, as the word ἐπίγνωσις signifies, and of coming into union with that blessed One that is known. And on this union love hath a great influence. St. John says, "We know the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life," 1 John v. 20. The understanding here spoken of is said to be given by which we so come to know God in Christ, as to be brought into union with him by love: it is, I say, a given thing, men have it not of themselves.

It is very requisite, and therefore I so long insist upon it, that we understand how necessary it is, that there be another and a better Spirit than our own, to render us capable of loving God, whom we have not seen; for otherwise we shall never love beyond the sight of our own eye. And it is very strange, that this necessity, since the case speaks itself, and the Holy Scriptures so often declare it, should be no more understood. If there be no such necessity, what is the reason we are taught to "pray for the Spirit," (Matt. vii. 9, 10, 11.) as starving children do for bread? That we are bid to "live in the Spirit," (Gal. v. 25.) "to walk in the Spirit," (Rom. viii. 1.) and "by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the flesh?" ver. 13. And are we not told, that we must "be born of the Spirit, or else we shall never enter into the kingdom of God?" John iii. 3. All this is plain language one would think, and easy enough to be understood by those that have a mind to it. But it is very observable, that those notions which tend to make as little as possible of the depravity and corruption of man's nature, to magnify beyond measure the power of man in his fallen state, to depress preaching, and to make light of the operations of the Holy Ghost upon the minds of men, are all of a sort, all of a piece. These are notions that hang upon one thread, and when we see wherein they issue and terminate, we may easily discern the danger of them; and into how great hazard they bring the eternal concerns of the souls of those men, who suffer themselves to be tainted with them. We again further infer,

7. That the work of regeneration must needs stand in very great part in the implanting and seating in the souls of men such principles, as may directly tend to control the dictates of sense, and in opposition to it rule and govern in men. The infirmity and distemper of man's nature easily show, wherein this cure and renovation must consist. This is at present the great distemper of his soul, it cannot love but where it can see. It is the sight of the eye that carries the heart, and draweth it this way and that way. A most dreadful distemper this! But as we know the distemper, we know wherein the cure must consist. Regeneration is that which restores the man to his right mind, and sets things to rights again with him. Though his former state is expressed by being in the flesh, he is now said to be in the Spirit, from the spiritual frame created in him by the great work of regeneration. Thus, says the apostle, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you," Rom. viii. 9. And the thing produced in the work of regeneration is called spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John iii. 6. While man is in flesh he is capable of loving nothing but what is seen, nothing but what to his senses appears amiable and lovely. Herein therefore stands the work of regeneration, to take a poor sensual creature, a mere lump of flesh, and to make him spiritual; and then it is he becomes capable of loving God. There must be a new creation, and right principles planted in the mind, to influence the heart, and to direct and determine souls towards God, from whom they were cut off and so dreadfully alienated. Again, in the

8. Place, we further infer, that the power by which it comes to pass that there are any lovers of God in the world, is highly to be adored and magnified. You see it is far more difficult to love God, whom we see not, than our brother whom we do see. How then can this difficulty be overcome, unless Divine power implant this principle of love? We ought therefore to make the representation of that power, that hath wrought this work in us, appear very glorious in our own eyes, that so with reference to this matter our hearts may be put in an adoring posture. Let us then bless and adore that glorious Being, who hath done such a thing as this; who hath made a stupid sensual heart, which could never rise beyond the sphere of flesh, ascend and enlarge itself, and fix and terminate its love

upon the blessed God. "How great is the power" (should one say that finds it thus) "which hath done this in me! to make a clod of earth, a lump of clay; to love God! This is as great a thing as out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham." In reality we ought not to think little or meanly of this. And again,

9. We may further infer, that the life of Christians in this world cannot but be a conflicting life. The life of a Christian as such must be influenced throughout by the love of God. He is to act according to the direction of St. Jude, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," ver. 21. Is this the business of a Christian, and what must be his very life to live in the love of God all along? then he must indeed live a conflicting life all his days. That is, there must be a continual conflict kept up against imperious sense, and its dictates, which always is crying to the heart of man, "Love what is seen, what you perceive to be lovely:" there must, I say, be a continual striving in the heart of a Christian against this; since he must keep up a continual love to him whom he cannot see, to him who is far above out of sight.

This showeth, that they who know not what a continual striving against sense, its dictates, and inclinations, means, are yet to learn what the business of the Christian life is. How can a man love God whom he seeth not? When there is a continual difficulty, there must be a continual striving and vigorous endeavours always used. Loving God is not swimming down with the stream of nature, it is quite another thing. And agreeable to this, what a strife is represented all along, throughout the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, between the "law of the flesh," and the "law of the mind;" the inclinations of sensual nature, and the spiritual dictates and prescriptions which are by the apostle called "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 2. which doth as it were repeal and abrogate the law of sin and death; and so far as it obtains, delivers a man from its impositions and imperious commands, which lead to death.

It is highly needful for us to state our own case to ourselves, and to consider what we are like to meet with in our Christian course; and if we mean to persevere, we must resolve upon a striving conflicting life all our days, for thus it must be. How much then are they beside the Christian course, who know not what it is to strive against any inclination of their own, nor to oppose the earthly tendencies of their own spirits; who can never find occasion to contend with themselves; who espy no fault in the temper of their own spirits, but carry the matter to themselves as if all were well; who can pass a whole day with no rebukes nor checks, when their hearts have run after their eyes only! These persons perhaps have never minded, never loved any thing better than what came within the reach of their senses, or could be seen with the eye; and yet they are innocent creatures in their imagination, and think they have no cause to blame themselves. But let us not be deceived, who see that the life of a Christian must be a continual running counter to a man's own eyes, and the dictates of sense; since these prescribe to a man to love only what he sees, whereas certainly he is no Christian who liveth not in the love of God whom he doth not see. In the

Last place, we further infer, that the proneness of men to acquiesce in a civil deportment, and to rest in the mere formalities of religion, hath one fixed common cause, and that is, the want of the great principle of love. In this respect it is fit that we should consider what the case of man is. Men are very apt to satisfy themselves with a fair and unexceptionable carriage to others, or at most with a little formality in the duties of religion, and never look further; which certainly must proceed from one and the same cause, namely, the want of love to God. This, I say, in the

(1.) Place, is the reason why persons are so prone to acquiesce in a fair and civil deportment towards men. It is necessary for us to know this, that so the danger of it may be more carefully avoided and deeply dreaded. What is it that is really the principle of duty even towards men? Certainly it is love. This is easy, as the text supposes, towards men, in comparison of what it is towards God; men therefore are apt to take up with what they find most easy.

The state of the case lieth thus. There are characters of the ancient law, which God at the creation impressed upon the spirit of man; *Lex non scripta sed nata; The law not written, but born with us*, as one heathen writer expresses it, or the νόμος φύσικος, *natural law*, as another heathen writer calls it. There are, I say, still some broken parts, some scattered fragments, some dispersed characters of this law, which was by our Maker put into our very frame, which lie discomposed and dispersed here and there in men, whereof some refer to our duty towards God, and others to our duty towards men. Those relating to men are more legible, are oftener read, and come more frequently under view. For how much more prevalent is this sense in the minds of men, "My neighbour is not to be wronged or disobliged," than this, "God is not to be forgotten, neglected, disobeyed!" Why, the matter being so, that the characters representing our duty to men are oftener in view, and so more frequently furbished, as it were, and brightened, than those which express our duty to God; being, I say, more frequently reflected upon, they are more put into practice. And therefore here men are apt to take up, saying, "I do that which is just, honest, and fair before men, and there are none that can charge me with the contrary." And so they think their case is very good.

Indeed there are several things concurring to make such principles, as point out to us the duties we owe to man, more influential upon practice. As for instance, men have sensible kindnesses from one another, which work upon ingenuity, and so influence to a suitable behaviour to them that show such kindnesses. When they receive a kindness from the hand of a man, it is from a visible hand. They see who doth them good. Though there is a thousand times more good done them by the invisible God, but his invisible hand they take no notice of.

Again, they are sensible continually of their need of men. All persons sensibly find they need some other, for they cannot live alone. They are not only obliged to a mutual dependence upon one another, but they are very sensible of it; and therefore are apt to carry it so much the more fairly to men, as those who stand in need of one another.

Besides, men find a sensible advantage from the reputation of a fair, just, and honest carriage to others. "If I have not the repute of being a person kind, goodnatured, and well-humoured, I shall have no friend; nobody will converse with me, but be shy of me. If I have not the reputation of being a just man, honest and square in all my dealings, I shall have no trade, no one will trust me, every one will be afraid to have to do with me." These considerations dispose us to good behaviour towards one another.

Finally, men are frequently sensible of hurt or some great inconveniences accruing to them, if at any time they misbehave themselves to others. They that are morose and churlish do often fall upon tempers as cross-grained and perverse as their own, and so meet with such measure as they bring. If they be quarrelsome, it falls out sometimes that there are those who will quarrel with them, and will not take an affront at their hands. And though there are some that scorn the tutorage and instruction of fear, which should govern them in the conduct of their affairs; yet many others are more prudent, and are not apt to follow the hurry of their own pride and inclinations. They consider how much it concerns them, not to provoke those who will right themselves, nor to injure those who will be sure to meet with them one time or other. Yea, those who are more considerate will be very cautious how they make any man their enemy, even the meanest; for no man is so mean but it may be some time or other in his power to do him a shrewd turn.

Such inducements there are, I say, as these, unto a fair and unexceptionable deportment towards men, whom we see and converse with every day. And with this men are inclined to take up their rest; contenting and satisfying themselves with this, that they carry it to others, so as that none have any great reason to find fault with them, and thereupon think that God will find none neither.

(2.) There is also a proneness in mankind, as we observed, to take up with formality in the matters of religion. For what besides formality can there be in the religion of those who love not God? If I pretend to worship him and not love him, though I spend all my days upon my knees, will it signify any thing as to real religion? But because this is more easy, that is, bodily exercise than that of love, or an inclination of mind and heart to God, it is natural to take up with it for that reason, and to rest there.

The Pharisees among the Jews, one would think, should not have been to seek where religion really lay; but, alas! where did they place theirs? In ceremonial sanctity, in washing their hands before they did eat bread, in cleansing their cups and platters, and in frequent purifications of themselves; all which they made to be as significant things, as the instituted rites of worship by God himself. Moreover they were very exact in tithing mint, rue, and all manner of herbs, while in the mean time they "passed over judgment and the love of God," Luke xi. 42. What a strange oversight was this! that the Pharisees, those devout men, those zealous pretenders to the greatest strictness in the observance of the law of God, as well as to the profoundest knowledge of it, even beyond all other men, should be guilty of such an oversight as to pass over the sum and substance of it, to wit, the love of God! And yet our Saviour speaks of it as their common character. If then the Pharisees, those knowing and strict men, as they would be thought to be, were in such an error as this so commonly, we may well conclude that the spirits of men are generally prone to acquiesce in the mere externals of religion, and to take up with the outside thereof without ever going any further. They think their case is well enough with God if now and then they bow the knee, compliment him in duty, and put on some face and show of devotion; while in the mean time the love of God is an unthought-of thing. So that how many must say, if they would speak as their case truly is, "I never thought that the love of God must go into my worship." Since then the proneness of mankind to acquiesce in a fair and civil deportment, and in the mere formalities of religion, proceeds from one common, fixed cause, to wit, the want of this Divine principle of love, it is necessary that we consider the matter, lest we ourselves be thus dreadfully imposed upon.

And now to conclude this first part of our subject, it appears that temptations to atheism must needs find great advantages in the temper of men's spirits, while they are so depressed and overborne by sense. For its essence, particularly of practical atheism, consists in the alienation of the heart from God. And how easy a step is it from hence to speculative atheism, when a man has lived so long "without God (ἄθεοι, the apostle's phrase is) in the world!" Eph. ii. 12. For if he do not love God whom he hath not seen, for the same reason he will not fear him; neither hope nor rejoice in him as his chief good. How obvious is it for such a man to entertain such a thought as this? "Is it not as good to say, there is no God, or I will own none; as to say, there is no one that I will love or fear, nor any one with the thoughts of whom my heart is at any time affected?"

Let us therefore hence take occasion to admire the patience, and much more the bounty, of God towards his revolted creatures in this world. How wonderful is it that he spares and maintains them also! that he should make constant provision for such as put the highest affronts and indignities upon him, by loving and preferring his own dust, before him who formed it into what it is; by exalting the work of his hands above him; and finally, by profusely bestowing their affections on the creature, but none upon God the great Creator of all! Do not we think this is a thing not to be endured? and do not we wonder that it is actually endured, and that men are permitted from age to age, to continue in this course, and are suffered by vengeance to live, when the whole business of their lives is to express how much more they value despicable nothings, creatures like themselves, than the great, the blessed, and glorious Lord of heaven and earth! Certainly it should be often our business to set ourselves to admire the sparing and sustaining mercy which God exerciseth towards this world, while this is the state of things between him and apostate men.

SERMON V.*

WE have hitherto been showing you from these words, That men are less apt to love God than one another, principally for this reason, because God is not the object of sight as men are. We are now to go on to the

SECOND thing observed from them, namely, That we are most indispensably obliged to the exercise of this duty, though we see him not, and therefore notwithstanding this excuse, it is a most intolerable thing not to love God.

This hath its manifest ground in the text, and doth fundamentally belong to the apostle's reasoning in this place. For the argument or medium which he reasons from is this, that if we do not love our brother whom we have seen, then we cannot so much as love God whom we have not seen. By which he endeavours to represent how grievous a thing it would be, if Christians should continue in a mutual neglect of one another. Now all this would fall to the ground, and signify nothing, if they were disengaged from loving God upon the account of his invisibility. But the apostle takes it for granted, that all men must esteem it a most horrid thing to be convicted of not loving God; otherwise his argument would be altogether to no purpose. For it might have been replied to him, "Though we be convicted of this, that we do not love God, inasmuch as we do not love one another, yet what is the inconvenience of such a neglect? We grant the whole, but what are the ill consequences that follow upon it?" Now the apostle doubts not but they would see the consequences, and that every man must needs take it to be an intolerably hateful thing to pass for one that is no lover of God. This therefore is supposed by the apostle as a fundamental circumstance in his discourse—that not to love God, though we see him not, is a most horrid hateful thing, as well as absolutely inexcusable.

Now as this is plainly to be collected, so it is very necessary to be insisted upon. For as it is apparent, that as men commonly do not love God, or at least are less disposed to it, because they see him not; so they are very apt to excuse and exempt themselves from guilt upon this account. "Why should I look upon it," says one, "as so abominable a thing not to live in the exercise of love to God? He is out of sight, sure he expects no such thing from us who cannot see him, and who live at so great a distance from him!"—What multitudes are there who can wear out the whole time of life, and never charge themselves with any fault all their days for not having lived in the love of God! As if the old heathenish maxim were their settled notion, *Quæ supra nos, nihil ad nos; We have nothing to do with what is so far above us.*

And besides, this is not only the latent sense of most of that which lies closely wrapt up even in the very inwards of their souls, to wit, that they have little to do with God, and need not concern themselves about him; but it is also what many have the confidence to speak out, and to declare in plain express words. It is very notorious that there are sundry persons in the world, not of one denomination or party only among the professors of the Christian name, who are not afraid to avow this very sense Those who have made it their concern to look into the doctrines that have been handed about in the Christian world, do well know whose casuistical divinity this is, "That we are not obliged to love God, unless it be once or twice a year." Or as some have presumed to say, "If it be only once in a man's life-time it may serve the turn," as a worthy person, now removed from us, hath largely shown; as also what the morals and practical divinity of that sort of men are. And another[a] of quite a different strain, who hath disciples more than a good many in our time, in his discourse of the human nature, would slily insinuate, that we are not obliged at all to formal direct acts of love to God, from this very passage of Scripture in

* Preached September 20th, 1676.

a Hobbes.

the next chapter of this epistle, This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, 1 John v. 3. As if because the apostle would there include all the external effects virtually in the principle, it was therefore fit to exclude the principle itself by the external effects. Nor indeed was there ever any time or age wherein the heart and life of practical religion and godliness were so openly struck at as in our days, by the perverse notions of some, and the scorns of others: as if it were thought a very feasible thing to jeer religion out of the world; and that men ought to be ashamed to profess love to God, because they can have the impudence and be so daring as to laugh at this and such like things.

We are therefore so much the more concerned to bestir ourselves, and to look more narrowly into the very grounds and bottom of our own practice in the ways of religion. We are to consider whether indeed we have a reason to oblige us to be godly, yea or no; and especially is it incumbent upon us to defend this great principle and summary of all godliness, *The love of God*. For certainly if we must yield to the extinction of this principle, if a love to God may be banished from among us, we turn all our religion into nothing else, but a mere piece of pageantry. How vain and foolish, how absurd and ridiculous, things were the forms of religion, which we keep up from time to time, supposing this great radical principle was to have no place nor exercise among us! To come together, and make a show of devotion to him whom we do not love, nor think ourselves obliged to love, is nothing but inconsistency and contradiction. And those who came on such terms, as oft as they undertake to worship God, must needs offer nothing but the sacrifices of fools. But it is our business to defend this principle; to vindicate it against every thing that can be alleged against it by those who would excuse themselves from the obligation to this duty, from their not seeing God. And that we may the more fitly prosecute the present design, we shall endeavour to do these two things.

I. To show the vanity and impertinence of this excuse for not loving God, to wit, our not seeing him.

II. To demonstrate the intolerable heinousness of this sin notwithstanding, and to show its horrid nature though God is not visible to us. Because persons are apt upon this ground or reason either totally to excuse themselves, as if there were no iniquity at all in it; as there are multitudes of people who can pass over their days one after another, without any emotion of heart to love towards God at all: or else because if they cannot obtain of themselves against the clearest light to believe it is no sin; yet they would fain have it to be only a peccadillo, or a very little one. "God, say they, cannot expect much love from those who cannot see him! or that such beings to whom he is invisible should mind him much, or concern themselves with him from day to day!" Therefore I say, we shall endeavour both to show, how most impertinently this is alleged as an excuse for not loving God, or how unreasonable it is to infer from his invisibility, that we are under no such obligation: and after that, to represent to you the hateful nature of the sin: or to show, that if we love not God, it is not only a sin notwithstanding this pretence, but a most prodigious and horrid one too.

I. That we may evince to you the vanity of this excuse, or the impertinency of alleging that we are not obliged to love God, because we see him not, there are these two things that we charge this excuse with, and shall labour to make out concerning it; to wit, that it is both invalid and absurd. It is invalid, because it hath nothing in it which a valid excuse ought to have. And it is monstrously absurd, and draws most intolerable ill consequences after it, if such an excuse should be admitted in such a case.

1. I shall show the insufficiency of this excuse, or that it is vain and hath nothing in it which a valid excuse should have. "We do not see God, therefore we are not concerned to love him." This will easily be made out to you thus. Whenever any thing is charged upon us by a law, and the exception lies not against the authority of the lawgiver, but only the matter of the law as applied to us, no excuse can be valid in that case, but where the matter brought in excuse shall be able to prove one of these two things: either that what is enjoined, is in itself impossible to us, or at least that it is unfit and unreasonable to be expected from us. But our not seeing God can never infer either of these. It neither renders our loving him impossible; nor unfit and unreasonable, supposing it to be possible.

(1.) Our not seeing God doth not render our loving him impossible. This it is needful for us rightly to understand before we proceed any further. The thing that we intend to make out to you is, not that it is possible to us to love God by our own natural power. You have heard already enough to the contrary. He can never be truly loved by us, till the Spirit of love is given us; which is also at the same time a Spirit of power, and of a sound mind. Till then, I say, it is impossible that any should love God. But when he implants this principle in us, he doth not therefore render himself visible to our bodily eye, which is the seeing here meant, for we must understand the word in the same sense in both parts of the text. All that we have to evince then is, that our not seeing God as we do our brother, does not make it impossible for us to love him. So that our present inquiry is not concerning the power, that gives the principle of love; but only concerning the means that should be made use of, in order to the begetting or planting that principle. Which being understood, the several considerations following will plainly evince to us, that our not seeing God doth not render it impossible to us to love him.

1st, Consider that the sight of our eye is not the immediate cause or inducement of love to any thing, but only a means to beget an apprehension in our minds of the loveliness of the object. And then it is, that is, upon the perception of this loveliness, that we are brought to love the object itself. For after the sight of the eye there must pass in the mind an act of the judgment upon the object, before we can be brought to love it; otherwise we should love or hate every thing that we see promiscuously, and not distinguish objects of love from objects of hatred. It is only the apprehension of the mind, even in reference to objects of sight, that brings us to love them. If there be any other means of begetting an apprehension in our mind concerning such and such objects, that they are lovely and fit to be loved, it is not necessary that we should see them with our eyes. To this we add,

2dly, There are other sufficient means to possess our minds with an apprehension of the loveliness of an object, and more especially those objects that are never liable to the sight of our eye. We do not need to insist much on so plain a case. It is plain that there are sundry ways, by which the apprehension of the loveliness even of an invisible object, may come to have place in us; invisible at least so far as to be out of the reach of our eye. To be a little particular here:

There is, for instance, with respect to the unseen God, naturally a divine impression upon the minds of men, by which, when they are put upon reflection, they must needs own that he is not only a lovely, but the most lovely and amiable object, and has the best right to claim their love. Whosoever they are that do acknowledge a God, [b] must also read such attributes and properties of the being of God engraven there, importing that he is the first and supreme object of our love. No one that acknowledgeth a God, but presently acknowledgeth too, that he is good; that he is true; that he is holy; that he is wise; and the like. And then his own heart must tell him, whether he will or no, that he ought to be loved above all.

Again, our own reasonings from the manifest visible effects and characters of Divine wisdom, and power, and goodness, that are to be seen every where, may also beget an apprehension or judgment in us that he should and ought to be loved. Do we live in a world full of the Divine glory, that arrayeth and clotheth every thing we can cast our eyes upon; and do we want ground to perceive, that this is the lovely Object that ought to captivate all hearts, and draw into a closure with itself the will of every intelligent creature? Moreover,

b As Epicurus himself confesseth this to be a proleptic notion, that prevents every man's reason, so as that he needs not argue the matter with himself, but if he will but read what is written in his own soul, must read *that there is a God*. See more of this in the Author's Living Temple, Part I. Chap. 2.

The express testimony of the Gospel is another means more apt still to beget this apprehension within us, that God is one we should love, and whose excellencies do every way entitle him, with a most indisputable right, to the highest degree and supremacy of our love. "No man hath seen God at any time," John i. 18. What then? Is it therefore impossible that he should be loved? Hath not "his only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, declared or revealed him?" Surely he hath made such a declaration of him, given such a prospect and view of him to the world, as that every one who will believe a God, and receive his report, must confess him to be the most amiable and excellent Being. Here all hearts ought to meet and unite; and this ought to be the universal centre of love. "He is in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" (2 Cor. v. 19.) giving mankind a lovely prospect of himself. And in him, who is Emmanuel, God with us, he is ready to communicate himself, and to draw souls into union with him, and to a participation of his own likeness and felicity. Who then is there but must acknowledge, that upon this representation he lays a just claim to our highest love? Finally,

There is also the inward revelation of the Holy Ghost, by which the want of seeing God is abundantly supplied. It is true, this Spirit of wisdom and revelation, by which we come to the practical knowledge of God so as to love him, is but the portion of a few. But it is in the mean time the great fault and wickedness of every one who seeks it not, values it not, and makes it not his business, with an earnest and restless importunity, to sue for it till it is obtained. God hath given no man any cause to despair; but if he seek that Spirit, by which he may be so known as to be certainly loved, he hath given him ground to hope that he shall have that knowledge of him, which shall be efficacious of that love. God has given no ground to any to despair, or fear that they shall seek in vain; but as our Saviour says in this very case, If they seek, they shall find, for he is more ready to give the Holy Spirit, than parents are to give bread rather than a stone to their children, Matt. vii. 7—11. And now that there are so many ways for conveying the apprehension into the mind, which is to be the immediate parent of love, to wit, that this object is most amiable; it is more evident, that the not seeing God, doth not render it impossible for him to be loved. And we may further consider to this purpose,

3dly, That in sundry cases besides, other means than sight, do suffice to convey such apprehensions into the mind, as to excite and raise proportionable affections in the soul. Then why should it not be so in this case? For what can any man say why he ought not to be moved by such apprehensions concerning God, as are by other means brought into his mind than by sight? What! do you love nothing, do you never find your hearts taken with any thing, but that which your eyes have seen? Is it an impossible thing, or what your ears never heard of, for a person to love only upon report, as being informed of such and such excellencies and perfections in the object? Have not many been taken with the description of a country they have not seen? Or do we think it impossible for a blind man to love his children, his wife, his friend? Do we imagine that such persons, because they can see nothing, can therefore love nothing? Do you not love your life? You cannot see that, but only in the effects; and in the effects also you may see the blessed God himself, who is the life of your life. And who can deny, that they have notions in their own minds of things that are altogether unliable to sight; which, if they will but ask themselves the question, they must acknowledge to be lovely, and which many are actually brought to love. For instance, the notions of truth; the abstract ideas of this, and that, and the other virtue; things that are never discoverable by the eye; who that considers, but must acknowledge a loveliness in them? And how many in fact are brought into a real and hearty love with such fair and orderly contextures of truth, when they see things do well cohere and hang together? The ideas of justice, fortitude, humility, patience, temperance; how many are there that do really love and admire these virtues, though they only perceive the beauty and usefulness of them by the mind, and in their effects?

So then it is no impossible thing that there may be that apprehension in the mind concerning God, upon which he shall be confessed to be lovely, and that he ought to be loved though he is never to be seen. The case is the same as to other affections, and there is a parity of reason between them. If it were impossible to love any thing but what one sees, we are proportionably incapable of fearing, hating, or admiring any thing but what we see. But let any one ask himself the question, whether he is not many times offended at the mention of things he doth not see; and whether his heart is not really afraid of things as yet invisible; or whether he hath not been many times raised into an admiration of sundry things, of which he has only heard the report. And again, I add in the next place,

4thly, That many persons have lived in this world in bodies of flesh as we do, exercising a holy love to God, notwithstanding they never saw him. Therefore it is no impossible thing; for what has been, may be, according to the old maxim, *Quod fieri potuit, potest.* Do we think that there have been no lovers of God in the world, who have lived in bodies and depended on sense as we do? God knows there have been but few, in any time or age of the world; yet have there not been some who have loved him, and have not loved their lives unto the death for his sake? What professions of love, what raptures of phrase and expression, do we find many times in Scripture from those whose hearts were full of and overflowed with love? When the fire burned within, it could not be withheld from flaming out. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength," says David; and again, "I love the Lord," that is, from my very bowels, "because he hath heard my voice and my supplications," Psalm xviii. 1. cxvi. 1. How full are the Psalms of these expressions! and we must suppose the Psalmist to be full of an answerable sense. "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul fainteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" xlii. 1, 2. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts?" lxxxiv. 1. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple," xxvii. 4. "For whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee," lxxiii. 25.

Such expressions as these verbal ones, and some significantly real actions and sufferings on the account of love to God, will not suffer us to doubt but that there have been true lovers of God, whatever there are in our days. And it is to be hoped, that there are some even now. However it is to be feared, that there are persons in the world who are heartily grieved, and vexed at the very heart, that there should be such expressions as these now mentioned, in those writings which they think it convenient to acknowledge as divine. For if they did not think thus, how loudly and clamorously would David and those who speak such words, have been cried out upon; and perhaps be charged with being fanatics and enthusiasts, as much as any in our days!

And that an unseen God should be loved, and an unseen Christ, who is also out of sight, is spoken of in Scripture not only as the true character, but the high glory of Christian believers. "Whom having not seen," says St. Peter, "ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. This is not barely affirmed, concerning these primitive Christians, but spoken of them, as their high praise and encomium; as being a discovery of the refinedness, excellency, and greatness of their spirits, who could so far lift up themselves above sense and sensible things, as to place their highest and most vigorous love upon an unseen object. That was glorious joy, and glorious love, placed upon what was not seen; a deserving object, at least believed to be such, though not seen.

And so it is we know that the blessed God becomes visible. "By faith Moses endured, as seeing him who is invisible," Heb. xi. 27. The word of God is a representation of himself, and makes report of all the glorious excellencies belonging to him. Among the rest this is his peculiar and distinguishing attribute, "that he cannot lie," Heb. vi. 18. His truth is one of those excellencies; there-

for it is impossible that he should misrepresent himself, or say that he is other than he is, "For," as the apostle says, "what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 11. He sure can best tell what an excellent and glorious Being he is; and as he has told us he is such a one, (which it was impossible he should do if he were not really possessed of those excellencies,) then there is all the reason in the world to acknowledge, that he ought to be loved infinitely above all. And this hath been the sense of many, whose practice also hath been answerable to it; who have been in this world, living in tabernacles of clay and earth as we do. Therefore it follows, that it is no impossible thing that God should be loved, though he be not seen. And supposing it not impossible, then,

In the next place, it is easy to be proved also, that it is not unfit to love God, for that reason. Sundry suggestions might be used to enforce this, and afterwards the absurdities of this excuse might also be brought in view. Indeed I have had it most in my eye, to expose this absurd principle, that men have no need to concern themselves with things unseen; I would fain, I say, drive it out of the world. And if men would but examine it thoroughly, it would appear to them monstrously absurd. To do this, therefore, and set it before their eyes, would be worth our time, and shall accordingly be done hereafter

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SERMON VI.*

UPON the latter part of the text lies the main weight of the discourse we have in hand. "How can he love God whom he hath not seen?" In which it is plainly implied, that we are still perpetually bound to love God, notwithstanding his being invisible. And the vehemence of the apostle's expostulation here, implies it to be a most intolerable thing not to do so. And therefore we have observed,

That not to love God is a sin most horrid and heinous, notwithstanding the excuse that we see him not. Here we proposed in the

I. Place, to show the vanity and impertinence of this excuse; and then,

II. To demonstrate the heinousness of this sin, and its horrid nature.

In order to evince the impertinence of this excuse, there were two things which it was charged with; to wit, that it has nothing which a valid excuse should have; and if it could be admitted, it would draw the worst consequences after it.

1. It is insufficient, as we have observed, to allege this as an excuse for not loving God, that we see him not; because it is not for this reason impossible, nor unfit, that God should require this by a law.[a]

(1.) It is not impossible. For the sight of our eye is not the immediate cause of our loving any thing, but only the medium by which the mind discerns the loveliness of the object. For there are other means besides this of sight, to possess our minds with the love of certain things. And since there are such in the present case, which lead us to the love of God, and have actually led others to it, it is therefore possible to be done, and is by no means an improper thing to be the matter of a law. We now proceed,

(2.) To show that it is not an unreasonable law; or, that it cannot with any colour be pretended, that it was an unfit thing that God should lay a law upon men, dwelling in flesh as we do, obliging them to love an invisible being. We shall here first examine what can be pretended from God's invisibility, to make it unfit to oblige men by a law to love him; and then lay down some considerations to evince that it is most reasonable and fit that men should, notwithstanding, be under this obligation.

1st, Let us examine what may be thought of as a pretence to the contrary, or alleged against the obligation of this law. Perhaps some may object against it after this manner: "That admitting what hath been proved, that it is no impossible thing that God should be loved by men who see him not; yet it doth not therefore follow that it is the fit matter of a law. Many things are possible, yet very unfit to be enjoined, especially those things which are unsuitable to the common inclination of a people. The wisdom of law-givers teacheth them to study the temper of their subjects, and to suit their laws to them; and it would be thought very unfit and improper to make laws, that should cross the common genius of the people; and to urge the observance of them. But now the dependance that we have upon sense, cannot but infer a disinclination to the love of such things as sight cannot reach, nor come within the sphere and cognizance of our senses. To apply this to the present case. Every man, by consulting himself, may find a disinclination in his own heart to the exercise of love to God. And what!" hereupon may the sensualist say, "must I be obliged to a perpetual war with myself? to run counter to all my most natural inclinations? to neglect the things which my own eyes tell me are lovely; and labour to love an invisible being, of whom I have none but cloudy thoughts, a very faint and shadowy idea? Who can imagine that I should be put into this sensible world, with such senses suitable thereunto, as I find about me; and that it must be expected from me that I must even renounce my senses, run counter to my very eyes, abandon the things which so presently court my love, and tell me so feelingly that they are delightful? In short, that I must retire from substantial good which I know, to seek after what appears to me as a dark shadow? and which whether there be any thing substantial in it, I know not?" Thus may the man devoted to sense pretend on such grounds, that God is not to be loved by such as we who dwell in bodies of flesh, and have so much dependance upon the things of sense. Well! let us examine this pretence a little, and see whether there is any thing in it to make the duty of loving God unfit to be imposed upon us in this our present state. And there are several things here to be considered in reference to this matter. As,

[1.] If we would have this inclination to signify any thing with relation to the fitness or unfitness of a law to be imposed upon us, we ought surely to examine whether that inclination be good or bad, and so judge. But can there be a worse inclination in any creature than to disaffect the Author and Original of its own being? And by how much the stronger the inclination is to evil, by so much the greater is the wickedness likely to prove. For do not we think every one more wicked as he is the more wickedly inclined, especially when he indulges his wicked inclinations? Doth not his evil inclination, I say, when indulged, add to, and not detract from, his wickedness? If one be found to have killed another, the great thing inquired into, is the inclination indulged, the intention; whether or no it was through malice prepense. If he did the thing without the design of ill to the party, without inclination or propensity to such an action, he is looked upon as innocent. An unintended fact is not punishable as a crime. Therefore to allege inclination in this case, is but to excuse one wickedness by another.

[2.] Consider what would become of this world, if men were to be ruled only by their own inclination, or if that were to be the only rule by which all laws relating to them were to be measured. What a dreadful state would you be in, if it were permitted to any man to rob, murder, rifle away your goods and destroy your lives, only because he is inclined to it! if every one might take from you what he would, and do any imaginable mischief to you or yours, merely because he hath a mind to it!

* Preached September 27th, 1676.

a Here we showed that if any thing be brought in excuse for not obeying the law, and the exception is not against the authority of the law-giver, but to the matter of the law, that which is alleged as a valid excuse, must be able to evince one of these two things: either that the thing enjoined by this law, is impossible to them on whom it is enjoined; or that at least, though possible, yet it is unfit, and therefore unreasonable to be imposed. Neither of which will be admitted. It is indeed impossible to men considered under the reigning power of sin, and while they remain so. It is so only by a compound impossibility: as there is a compound necessity, by which a thing is said necessarily to be, while it is. But to love God though we see him not, is not a simple impossibility; for then it were impossible that he should be loved by any one at all.

And whereas the disaffection to God is very common, and rooted and confirmed in men by their being disused to converse with things above the reach of their senses, (which might tend to invite their hearts and attract their affections,) how horrid a thing were it if such a vicious custom were to obtain the force of a law! or, if men were to be allowed to do so and so wickedly, only because they have been wont so to do! if the oftener the swearer, the drunkard, the fornicator, and the murderer, have indulged their respective vices, the more lawful it should be for them to continue such practices! if men, in a word, should be so far a law to themselves, as to be permitted to do whatsoever they have been used to do! or, as Seneca says, if a reasonable creature should go like a sheep, not the way he ought, but that which he has been used to: what, I say, can be more unreasonable and unfit than this?

[3.] It must be considered, that though it is the wisdom of a ruler to regard the inclinations of a people in making laws, yet sure there must be a distinction made between things indifferent and things necessary. But is there any thing of higher and more absolute necessity than the love of God, though we see him not? Doth not our experience tell us, that we stand in need of somewhat that we do not see, in order to the continuance of our being? much more in order to our happiness. If you had nothing but what you see to maintain life, do you think it were possible for you to live another moment? I would appeal to the considerate reason of any man, whether he were not to be thought a madman that should say, "I will be alive the next hour?" Man! there is somewhat invisible and unseen that is the continual Sustainer of thy life; "in whom we all live, and move, and have our being," Acts xvii. 28. Our own experience must convince us of this, that there is an invisible Being which hath dominion over our lives, otherwise every man could measure his own time. But do not we find men die before they are willing, and when they would fain live longer? Why, it is somewhat unseen that imposes this necessity upon them, "Here thou must expire!" No man hath power over the spirit to retain it, neither hath he power in the day of death, Eccl. viii. 8.

And again, is it at all necessary to us to be happy? Our own experience tells us that we are not as yet happy and satisfied. And common experience tells all the world, that all the things they can see and set their eyes upon, can never make them happy in this world. And if we expect to be happy in another, when will our eyes lead us to heaven? when will sense, inclination, and following the customs of this world, bring us to blessedness? It were a dreadful thing, if in a matter of so absolute necessity, custom or inclination were to be the measure of the law which must govern us. And again,

[4.] I add in the next place, that it is true indeed that rulers do consider the tempers and inclinations of a people under their legislature. And there is good reason they should do so, and not impose unnecessarily upon the people, things of mere indifferency, and so run the hazard of urging them into tumults about matters of very little consequence. But sure there is no such need or reason that the great Author and Lord of all things should so much concern himself what the inclinations of those are whom he is to govern. If they dislike his laws, and have an inclination to tumultuate or rebel against him, let their dislike and inclination be as strong as it will, He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh, and have them in derision; when they say, Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us, Psal. ii. 3, 4.

[5.] There is a very great difference in the consideration of laws already made, and of laws to be made. This law was made for man when he was no way disinclined to the love of God. It is a law as ancient as his being. He had it as soon as he had the nature of man. It is therefore a part of the law of nature, and one of the most deeply fundamental things in that law; for it is made the summary, and wraps up all laws whatsoever in itself; for all is fulfilled in love. And what! was it reasonable or fit that this law, so suitable at first to the nature of man, should be then repealed, when he thought fit to break and violate it? That were a strange way of superseding the obligation of a law, that as soon as it is transgressed, it should oblige no longer! Then may any subject be a sovereign; since there would be no need of any thing more to make a law cease to oblige him, than for him to disobey it.

[6.] Consider that our not seeing God is so far from having a necessary tendency to preclude the love of him, that if things were with men as they should be, and as they have been with some in the world, it would very much promote our loving him. For though we cannot see him, yet we see many things that are great arguments, and should be powerful inducements, to us to love him. It is true we do not see God with our bodily eyes, but we see the effects of his wisdom, his goodness, his mercy, and patience every where; and of his mighty power over all, especially over those who are for God and lovers of him.

If we take a view, as we can do with these eyes, of the beautiful and glorious works of his creation, we continually behold in the visible things that are made, the invisible power and Godhead, (Rom. i. 20.) which we are called upon to adore and love. And in the works of his providence and the ways of his dispensations towards men, great arguments of love do daily occur. And into what raptures of affection do we find holy souls transported even by the help of their own eyes! the things seen representing to them the great unseen Object of love. In what an ecstasy do we find David, upon the view of the beauty and glory of this creation! "How excellent is thy name in all the earth, O Lord our Lord, who hast set thy glory above the heavens!" What put him into this rapture? The sight of his own eyes. He beheld "the heavens the work of God's hands, the moon and stars which he had ordained;" and therefore as he begins, so he ends the Psalm in a transport; "How excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Psal. viii. And thus our own eyes may serve to be our instructors, and prompt us to the love of him, the great Author and Original of all that glory which we find every where diffused in this world.

The viewing God also in the ways of his providence, how hath it excited the love of holy men sometimes! When Moses and the children of Israel had seen that marvellous work of the sea divided, themselves conducted and brought safe through it, the waters made a wall on the right hand and on the left, and their enemies dead on the sea-shore, how did this set love on work in them! how is the blessed God adored and admired upon the account of what their eyes had seen of him! "Who, say they, is a God like unto thee? Who is like to thee among the gods, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. xv. 11. And after the people of God had seen that great salvation wrought that we find recorded in the fourth chapter of Judges, what a mighty raisedness of heart do we find in the next chapter, all shut up in this. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord, but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might," Judg. v. 31. Here was love set on work and raised to the height, so as even to pour out blessings upon all the lovers of God. What a phrase of benediction is that, "Let all that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might!" which proceeded from the view of his excellent greatness.

So that this pretence, that God is not seen, doth not make it unreasonable or unfit that the duty of love to him should be imposed upon men by his law. They are not for this reason necessarily disinclined to love him, and therefore this excuse for not loving him is neither reasonable nor fit, nor can exempt men from the obligation, as the objection supposes. Let us then see,

2dly, What can be alleged to prove, that the love of God is most fit and reasonable to be the matter of a standing and indispensable law. And to this purpose, in order to show how reasonable this is, we shall only note in general, that if any should object against the fitness of loving God on this ground, because he is not seen, and affirm that for this reason men should not be required to love him; what they have to say in this case, if it signifies any thing to the purpose, must be as strong an objection in all cases of like consideration, and must at last come to this; that it is unreasonable and unfit that men should be effected with any thing they cannot see. But the falsehood hereof, and the reasonableness of this injunction upon men, may

be gathered from this fourfold consideration; to wit, that we may be as sure of the objects of the mind, as we can be of the objects of our sight; that those of the former sort are generally more excellent; that we are concerned in them, as much at least, and in many of them infinitely more, than in the others; and finally, that what can only be the object of the mind may be more intimately present with us, than those things which are the objects of sense. And if we can make out all these, which I hope we may, then it must be concluded that God is so much the more to be loved, yea, infinitely more than any thing our eye can see or make a discovery of.

[1.] We may be as sure of the real existence of the objects of our mind, as we can be of any objects of our sight; or in other words, we may be as certain of the existence of invisible beings, as of visible ones. We may frame a notion of their existence with as much assurance; and form certain conclusions concerning their nature, though they are invisible to the bodily eye. We may especially be most sure of the existence of God, though we cannot see him; more indeed than we can be generally of the existence of visible things.

Sometimes the objects of our mind and sight meet in one, there is somewhat visible and somewhat invisible. As for instance, in actions that are capable of moral consideration, there is the action itself, and there is also the rectitude or irrectitude of that action. Now here is at once an object of my sight and of my mind; and I may be as certain of the one as of the other, in many instances. As, suppose I see one strike, wound, or kill an innocent person; or, suppose I see one affront a magistrate, injuriously or barbarously; here I have the object of my eye and mind at once. That the action was done, I am certain, for I saw the stroke; and I am no less sure of the affront, though that be an object of the mind. As soon as I see such an action done, do not I apprehend it to be ill done? Is not the thing which my mind apprehends, as real as that which my eyes see? Am I not as sure that it was ill done, as that the action was done at all? though the one falls under my eye, and the other only under the cognizance of the mind.

Again, if we look no further than ourselves, our own frame and composition, we may be as certain of the existence of what we see not, as of what we do see. We have a body. We are sure we have a body, for we can see it. It is many ways the object of our senses, or the external organs that are planted there. But we cannot see our minds; yet I hope we are nevertheless sure that we have minds. We are as certain that we have somewhat about us that can think, can understand, as we are that we may be seen and felt. I go not about to determine now what it is that thinks, whether material or not, mortal or not; but every man that will consider, is as sure that he has a mind which he cannot see, as that he has a body which he can see.

To bring this matter home to our present purpose concerning the Supreme invisible Being, the blessed God. It is most apparent that we may be as certain of his existence as of any thing; and unspeakably more certain of his constant existence, than we can be of any being whatsoever. There is no man that will use his understanding, but must allow this. For, suppose an object of sight before me, I am certain that it doth exist; for I see it. Now the following conclusion may be as certain to any one that considers, to wit, something is, therefore something hath ever been. I will appeal to any understanding man, whether this be not as certain as the other. For if we should suppose a time when nothing ever was, when nothing existed, any man's understanding must tell him, it was impossible that any thing should ever have been. Suppose a season when nothing was, and then was it possible any thing of itself should arise out of that nothing, when there was nothing at all conceivable? that a thing should be before it was, and do something when it was nothing? Therefore it is hence most necessarily consequent, that there must needs be some original, eternal Being, subsisting of itself, that was always, and never began to be; and therefore was necessarily, and so can never cease to be.[b]

Let this be but weighed, and let any sober understanding judge, whether this conclusion be not as certain as the former. That is, compare these two conclusions together, I see something, therefore something is; and this also, something is, therefore something hath ever been, some original Being that always was of itself, and could not but be. A man, I say, feels as great a certainty in his own mind concerning this, as concerning the other. He must renounce his understanding as much in one case, as his eyes in the other, if he will not grant this to be certain, that as some beings now exist, there has been always an original, self-existing Being.

And then supposing the existence of the thing already, I may form as certain conclusions concerning the attributes of what I cannot see, as of that which I can see. To apply this also to the invisible, eternal Being; look to any visible thing, and your eyes can tell what are its visible accidents. I look upon the wall, and see it is white. I know it is so, because I see it is so. Cannot I as certainly conclude concerning this original, eternal Being, that he is wise, holy, just, and powerful? I know that there is such a thing as wisdom, and justice, goodness, and power, in the world. I know that these things are not nothing, and that they did not come out of nothing; therefore they must needs originally belong to the original Being. Is not this as certain, and as plain, as any visible accident of any thing is to a man's eye? Must not these attributes necessarily first be in God, as in their original seat and proper subject? yea, a great deal more certainly, than any kind of quality we can suppose to be lovely in the creature can agree to it; because, as for the original Being, that existed of itself; and therefore is necessarily and by consequence eternally and invariably whatever it is. Therefore since these perfections are originally in God himself, or derivations from him, what should rationally keep a man in suspense, when by the intervention of his mind he sees such an invisible object, but that he should fall in love with that, as well as with any visible object, that commends itself as lovely to the sight. And I should next add,

[2.] That invisible excellency is infinitely greater than any visible excellency can be. As there is a reality in unseen things, and especially in this invisible object, as much as in any thing we see with our eyes; so there is generally a higher excellency in invisible objects, than in those that are visible, and infinitely more in this than in other invisible objects. But this and the other considerations I cannot reach to now.

SERMON VII.*

THE second head of discourse which we are still upon is this, That men are not released from the obligation to love God though he be invisible; and that it is not only an evil, but a most horrid and intolerable one too, not to love him, notwithstanding the excuse that we cannot see him. And this, as we observed, you have from the plain words of the text; inasmuch as all the force of the apostle's reasoning depends upon it. For he is endeavouring to evince how unreasonable it is we should not love one another; because upon this would ensue that infernal thing, our not loving God; rather than admit which, it is supposed that men would admit any thing. For the prosecution of this truth we propose to evince, in the first place, that this is a very vain excuse; and have already shown from many considerations, that it is not impossible to love God in these bodies of flesh, wherein we have such a dependance on the senses; neither is it unreasonable or unfit it should be enjoined as a duty. Against the contrary principle we have designed to insist on sundry considerations, and have observed already in the

[1.] Place, that we may be as sure of the existence of many invisible beings, especially of God, as we are of any that are visible. This we have shown, and also that it is

b This argument is urged at large, with great force and strength, in the Author's admirable Treatise, entitled the Living Temple. Part I. Chap. 2.

* Preached October 4th, 1678.

as easy to form conclusions respecting the nature of the former, as it is of the latter. Both these we laboured to evince from several instances; and concluded with observing to this effect, that since all perfections are originally in God, which we may discern by the intervention of the understanding, therefore it is as reasonable to love him, as any visible object how lovely soever; and more so indeed, because he is eternally and invariably the same. For, to add something further on this head,

I see and converse often with such or such a person, who because of certain amiable qualities that I discern in him, hath attracted and drawn my love; but I am never sure those qualities will remain in him always. I know not whether they be of that kind, yea or no, that they will remain. But I most certainly know that he will not always remain with me the conversable object of my love. And therefore if sense, if the sight of what is lovely in him, be the only ground of my love to him, I could never have loved him longer than my eye could see him. For as soon as he is gone out of my sight, I know not but he is gone out of being, out of the world, and so the object of my love may be quite lost. But I know that the eternal Being doth exist necessarily, and always. It is impossible that God should ever not exist, or ever be other than he was; and therefore if loveliness and amiableness were found there at any time, it is to be found there at all times; without variableness and shadow of change, yesterday and today the same, and for ever.

And now upon all this, since it is very plain and evident, that we may be as certain concerning what we see not, as concerning what we do see; as sure of the existence of invisible as of visible beings; and more especially about the nature and existence (as far as concerns us) of the blessed invisible God; it is plain that there our love ought to have its exercise, as much as any where else, supposing such excellencies to be found in the invisible things, as may equally recommend the object to our love. Therefore we add,

[2.] That, invisible things are really of far higher excellency, than those which are visible. As the things that we cannot see have as certain a reality as those that we can see; so, I say, they are of higher excellency; and this blessed invisible object infinitely more excellent, as we must acknowledge, while we acknowledge him to be God. If we speak of such things as lie within the compass of our being, how plain is the case and how evident the inference! Sure the invisible world must needs be of incomparably greater excellency and glory, than the visible world. And if you reduce all kinds of being in the whole universe to these two ranks and orders, visible and invisible, certainly the latter must be unspeakably more excellent.

We who are for our parts set in the confines of both worlds, visible and invisible; we in whose very nature both meet, unite, and touch one another, and are as it were comparted together; we who are of a nature partly visible, partly invisible, partly flesh, and partly spirit, or as the language of Plato's school was, Νοῦς, ψυχή, mind and dust united into one compound; surely we should not be partial in our judgment of this case. Who should be impartial if we are not, who are set as a middle sort of creatures between the two worlds, and so are capable of looking into and surveying the one and the other.

And if we contemplate both even in ourselves, methinks it should be no difficult thing with us to determine which is of greater excellency, this bulk of flesh, or this spirit which inhabits it, and keeps it from being a dead lump, a useless, rotten, putrid carcass. Yea, if we should suppose the body of a man to be animated by some inferior vital principle to that of a reasonable spirit, yet this would be the more excellent part. It is true, we should then have before our eyes a certain sort of human brute, of which kind there are but too many in our age, at least that live and carry it as such. We should, in short, to speak plainly, have somewhat before our eyes that wore the mere shape of a man, and could hear, and see, and smell, and taste, and move to and fro this way or that, and must ere long, after a few turns are fetched about, turn to dust, to rottenness, and corruption. But suppose we a spirit separately, such as is wont to animate a human body; here we have to contemplate something that can think, reason, and understand; that can form abstract notions of things, or compare one thing with another; something that can reflect upon itself, which our eye cannot do; that can control and correct the errors of sense; that can run through the vast compass of known things; is capable of solving problems and difficult questions; of laying down principles and maxims of truth, after having weighed and found them firm, so as that they may pass current; for such there are which pass unquestionably every where for undoubted principles. In a word, we have here a kind of being to contemplate, that is capable of taking up what lies within the compass of philosophy, policy, and the whole human orb of learning; of being instructed in all the great mysteries of mechanical skill of every kind; and in short, that can turn itself every way; and is of a nature unperishable and immortal, not liable to nor capable of corruption, but must last for ever and always endure. Who now would make any difficulty of owning, that this is a far more excellent thing than the other; this spirit, than that shape of a man which merely lives? But yet even this more excellent creature which we have been supposing, is somewhat diminished, and falls beneath a brighter order of beings, by its being proportioned to a human body. And upon this account man is said to be a little lower than the angels, Psalm viii. 5. at least this is one account that may be given of this passage; for it is a diminution of the spirit of a man, that it is proportioned to its habitation, the body. But then consider those purely intellectual creatures, of whom we know not how to form a notion which shall be more expressive than to call them INTELLIGENCIES; inasmuch as they are, as far as we can apprehend them, beings of knowledge and light, and also of goodness and love proportioned to that light of theirs; what can match the excellency of such creatures as these, among the whole sphere of visible beings?

But let us further consider how vastly numerous that order of creatures is, as we may very well suppose, and partly collect from intimations of Scripture, where they are said to be innumerable. "The innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. xii. 22. How much of glory and excellency must then be in the invisible world, beyond what we can possibly conceive of in this lower visible region! If we do but bethink ourselves and consider what a mere punctilio, a little point, this earth is in which we dwell, in comparison of that vast expanse that doth surround and encompass it about; how unspeakably, how inconceivably more numerous must we suppose the inhabitants to be, that replenish those vast superior regions quite out of sight, than those which inhabit and replenish this point of earth! How vast, I say, must we suppose the invisible world to be, if we consider the number of its inhabitants who are parts of God's creation, whom we have reason to think do competently replenish all those vast regions that are, when our eye has gone as far as it can, far more exceeding the reach of our thoughts. What limits can we set to the creation of God in our most enlarged thoughts? Finite we must suppose it to be; but alas, we are never capable of measuring the bounds! And we have reason to believe it is every where replenished with such glorious invisible creatures as we speak of, in comparison of whom all the inhabitants of the earth, that ever were or shall be, are but an inconsiderable handful. Are we not then to think that the invisible world is far more excellent than that which is visible?

But then if we ascend to the great Author of all things, the blessed invisible object that we are concerned to speak about, that vast profound abyss of all excellencies, perfection, and glory, how much more must we conclude there is of excellency in that sort of being in general which is invisible, than in that which is visible! If we consider him inhabiting his own eternity, if we consider his immensity who was before all time, whom "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain," (1 Kings viii. 27.) every where existing, and never not existing; in whom there is an infinite fulness, a rich fountain of being, life, wisdom, power, goodness, and holiness, and whatsoever we can conceive under the notion of excellency and perfection: to think of such a being that was every where before all time was, and continuing to be the same when time shall be no more,

where no worlds are, and where never any shall be, replenishing all the space that we can imagine, and that we cannot imagine, all, every where, and eternally full of being, life, and glory! what an object have we now to contemplate, and think of in the invisible order of things! And what! would we confine all excellency as well as reality to this little, minute, inconsiderable earth? the things that sense can reach unto? as if our senses were to be the measure of all excellency, perfection, and reality, and it was the same thing for any thing to be nothing, or at least worth nothing, as to be out of our sight.

How unreasonable were such an imagination as this! And indeed well might we be ashamed, and count it a reflection upon our profession of the Christian name, that we may so often read pagans discoursing in transports of the INTELLECTUAL PULCHRITUDE, of the beauty and excellency of mental and invisible things; while our hearts, in the mean time, are taken with nothing but what our eyes can reach to see, or our senses to judge of. With what raptures do some of them speak of the first pulchritude, and the self-pulchritude, or that which is lovely of itself. Plato in particular calls him, "The being that is with itself, always agreeing to itself, always existing uniformly, never varying from itself, and lasting always." Thus he speaks of the first ORIGINAL BEAUTY, meaning the great object that we now speak of, to wit, the invisible God. But what a degeneracy is it to measure the objects of our love by the sight of the eye! whereas there is nothing fair or good, as philosophers speak, but what hath its derivation from the first pulchritude; or as it hath a kind of precarious beauty and comeliness derived to it from him, who is the first and original Beauty. If then we seriously bethink ourselves of this, we cannot but acknowledge that the prime object of our love lies among the invisible things. If we will but use our thoughts, we must say thus; this, I say, must be the conclusion, if we will not profess brutality, and renounce our humanity; that is, deny that we are human and reasonable creatures.

But because here it may possibly be said, "That admitting there be so great excellency and glory in the invisible sort of beings, yet we are to love where we are concerned; we are to place our love among things with which we have to do, and upon which we have dependance; but how little can we have to do with things invisible, and out of our sight!" Therefore I add,

[3.] We are a great deal more concerned about invisible than visible things. They are of much more importance to us, as well as of greater excellency considered in themselves. It will certainly be found one day, that faith, holiness, humility, meekness, mortifiedness to this world, a mastery over insolent and brutish passions, tranquillity, peace, and composure of spirit, those great ornaments of the hidden man of the heart, are of unspeakably more concernment, than all the things of the visible world besides. These are of greater importance to our present comfort, and to our future and eternal well-being, than whatsoever our senses can bring to our notice. But the invisible God is so most of all, who is infinitely beyond and above all.

And what! will any pretend, that they have no concern with God, because they cannot see him? no concern with him, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and in whose hand our breath is," without whom we cannot move a hand or lift a foot, or think a thought, or live a moment? Have we no concern with him? none in this present state? Or are we the less concerned with God, because we see him not? May we not be convinced, if we will allow ourselves to think, that it is somewhat invisible which our life and being depend upon? For we know ourselves to be depending beings. We do know and feel, yea our own thoughts and hearts must instruct us in this, that we are not self-subsistent. We have not in our own hands the measure of our time, nor the command of our own concernments. We find ourselves controlled and overruled in many things every day. There are many thousands of things that we would have otherwise, if we could tell how. There is something invisible to which we owe our breath, and that hath dominion over us, whether we mind it or not. And have we no concern with that being, which hath such immediate power over our lives, and all our comforts, in this present state and world? But what talk we of measuring our concernments by this present state? Have not our own souls a secret consciousness in them, that they are made for eternity? for a world where they are to be perpetual inhabitants, after a little short time is over? And have we not therefore now in this life most to do with invisible things, especially with the great invisible Lord, both of the visible and invisible creation?

We should soon know ourselves to be most concerned with what is invisible, and most of all with God, if we would but understand the state of our case. We know ourselves to be creatures. We did not come into this world of our own choice, or by our own contrivance. We made not ourselves, neither was it the object of our choice, whether we would be of this or that rank or order of creatures; but were put into that rank of beings wherein we are, by a superior and higher hand. Yea, considering what sort of being it is we have, and what a nature the great Author and Parent of all nature hath furnished us with, it is easy for us by a little reflection to come to this knowledge, that we are not what he made us; that we are fallen creatures as well as reasonable ones; that we have incurred the displeasure of him that made us; that we are absolutely at his mercy; that there is such a darkness and blindness upon our minds and understandings, and such a stupidity and death possessing our very souls, that can never be supposed to have been in the first formation of such a creature by the hands of God. Lastly, we may find, that we are become impure and corrupt; that there are perverse sinful inclinations and affections, which we ourselves cannot but disapprove of, and disallow upon reflection: and that hereby we are under a very egregious guilt, and so subject to wrath and eternal punishment. If we would but allow ourselves to consider this as our state, we should soon know that we have more to do with the invisible God, than with all the world of visible things. Yea further, how amiable would he appear in our eyes, if we did but understand ourselves! if we would but take notice what dark, blind creatures we are, how would it recommend him to us, who is represented as the light of our eyes, and the life of our hearts! In a word, if we would but consider what deformed creatures we are, how impure, and, alluding to the expression in Job, (Job ix. 31.) so plunged in the ditch, that our own clothes might abhor us, O how delectable would the thoughts of him be! how lovely would he be in our eyes that brings such overtures of purification to us! I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. And he that offers this, will certainly effect it in all those who are designed for a blessed commerce with him for ever, in order to make them perfect in his own comeliness.

Then again, if we consider how liable we are to his wrath, how fast bound with the cords of our own guilt, how amiable would that notion and name of God be to us, which was proclaimed to Moses, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. But we measure things by the sight of our own eye, because we will not allow ourselves to take any cognizance of the true state of our own case. Whereas if we did but consider the matter, and give ourselves leave to think and inquire, we should know there are things which concern us unspeakably more, that are out of sight, than what come under our view day by day; and that especially we are most concerned with him who is least in our sight, and most remote from the view of our external eye. And then add to all this,

[4.] That invisible things are a great deal more capable of being intimate to us, or we may be infinitely more conversant with them, than it is possible for us to be with things that are seen. We love a friend whom we have often seen; and it may be, the oftener we have seen him the more we love him. But we cannot be with this friend always. The dearest friends must part. We cannot have him perpetually in our bosom to converse with in a friendly manner. A great many things must concur to the entertainment of our friends with delight, and to converse with them with pleasure. For instance, they must be in a pleasant humour, and at leisure for converse. We many

times wait for visits, and they are not given; or we design them, but are disappointed. Messengers may be sent to this or that place, one after another; and yet two friends, that would converse, cannot be brought together. Besides, when we are conversing with such lower objects of our love, we must make use of speech, and are fain to employ words, those necessary but imperfect instruments, or media of conversation. But we cannot convey by words our full and clear apprehensions to others, so as to let them know all that we would have them know. And most of the controversies in the world, about matters of opinion in religion, do arise from hence, that men cannot be brought to understand one another. I cannot tell how to make another master of my thoughts, but one way or other the notion will be misrepresented, and so not lie so distinctly clear in another's mind, as it doth in his that would propagate it. But if we could this way infuse into them a full and clear knowledge of what we ourselves do intend, yet we cannot thereby infuse a living sense, nor convey the affections that are in our own bosoms to another by words.

But how intimately conversant may we be with the invisible God, and that blessed Spirit that understands not only our words, but our sighs and groans, and the living sense thereof that is unutterable. God can also be conversant with us whithersoever we go, wheresoever we are, so that as soon as we are minded to retire, we find him with us. As soon as we retire into ourselves with a design to converse inwardly with the living God, he is immediately present with us, and it is as easy to converse with him as with our own thoughts. As soon as we think, so soon are we with God, and as soon is he with us. In the twinkling of an eye we find him. We look unto him and are lightened. Thus with a cast of the eye the soul is filled; it finds itself replenished with a divine and vital light, that diffuseth the sweetest and most pleasant influences and savours through the soul.

Surely then, what is invisible, and most of all the blessed God, is most fit for our converse; an omnipresent God, who is every where present with us in the very first instant; so that there are no bodies, or other circumscribing circumstances, to withhold and divert that commerce between him and us; but he is with us in our walking in the way, in our sitting down in our houses, in our lying down in our beds, in any wilderness, in any den or desert. Certainly it can be no way unfit, that he should be chosen for our converse, and for the great object of our love, though we cannot see him. Our not being able to see him detracts nothing from the reasonableness of placing our love there, upon all these accounts. Therefore the pretence for our not loving God because he is invisible, is altogether insufficient, and carries nothing in it that a valid excuse should have to make it so. I should now proceed to show the intolerable absurdities of not loving God because he is invisible; but the time doth not give me leave now to speak them.

SERMON VIII.*

Having in the three last discourses shown the invalidity of the excuse for not loving God, drawn from his invisibility, we now proceed in the

2. Place, To evince more fully the obligation we are under to this duty, and to show the intolerable absurdity of this excuse, that is, of pleading that we do not love God, only because we cannot see him.[a] For,

(1.) It would infer, that we are to be affected or moved with no invisible thing whatsoever; or that nothing but what can strike our senses ought to touch our hearts. For if this be a good reason in the present case, we do not love God because we cannot see him, wheresoever the case is alike, the reason will be so too; and so we are to be moved by nothing at all, but what is to be seen. No threatening danger then is to be feared or provided against, and no distant good to be cared for; and so our greatest concernments, that should urge us more than all others, must be quite thrown aside. Our business for eternity and another world, the apprehensions of which, men cannot quite abolish out of their minds, must all stand still; and we live at such a rate that no man will be able to give a tolerable account what he liveth for, or what his business in this world is. For it is altogether inconceivable for what purpose such a creature as man is should be here in this world, furnished with so much higher and nobler faculties than the brute beasts, and yet to do no other business but what they might do as well as we.

(2.) It would hence be consequent, that the blessed God would be everlastingly excluded our love, or that he could never be loved by his reasonable intelligent creature, for an eternal reason; because he can never be seen, as we see our brother with eyes of flesh. None of us in this sense can ever behold God; and if this reason be conclusive, to all eternity he must be excluded our love. And so it may be affirmed even of his reasonable creatures, "None do love him, nor ever shall." And again,

(3.) According to this way of reasoning, God would lose his interest in our love by the excellency of his nature. And how monstrously absurd is it, that by how much the more excellent an object is, so much the less it should be loved! For it is owing to the excellency of his nature and being, that God cannot be seen. And is it not a horrid consequence, that because he is so excellent as he is, therefore he is not to be loved? Nothing is more manifest, than that by how much the more excellent any thing is, so much the more it is remote from our sight. And shall this be admitted a as principle, that by how much the more excellent any thing is, the less it shall be loved? Shall God lose his interest in our love, merely because he is so excellent and perfect as he is? or shall he for this reason be less loved than visible objects are? Again,

(4.) All commerce would hereupon cease, or rather never be, between the blessed God and his intelligent creature, at least all intellectual commerce suitable to such a creature. For if this were a good reason, He is not to be seen, therefore he is not to be loved, it would also follow, that he is not to be trusted, feared, or obeyed. All which would infer, that God hath made an intelligent being with whom he can converse no way suitable to its nature, than which nothing can be thought more absurd. Further,

(5.) All differences of moral good and evil, in such a case, would be quite taken away, or all apprehensions of them, from among men. For the rectitude or irrectitude of actions is not to be judged of nor discerned by the sight of our eye. We cannot by this means alone, tell whether this or that thing be right or wrong. And this by consequence would necessarily render mankind incapable of being governed by laws; because the reason why a law should oblige, doth not fall under any man's sight. The decency and fitness of a thing the eye does not reach; for to discern this is the business of the mind. And so it would be left altogether impossible for any one to assign a reason, why it should be more congruous to equity and justice for one to embrace his friend, than to murder him; why a man should relieve the poor who cannot help themselves, rather than oppress them; or why a man should not as well, and with as great reason and equity, affront a ruler, as obey him and be subject to his authority? So that in short you take away the foundation of converse with man, at the same time you take away the foundation of religious converse with God and invisible things. By this kind of argument you not only overturn the practice of godliness and piety, which is a great part of that love to God we ought to be exercised in, but you do as effectually by the same means destroy all civil commerce between man and man, howsoever related; and leave no foundation for human society, considering the members of it in relation to governors or rulers, and to one another. And,

(6.) It would hence follow, that the original constitution of man's nature was made up of inconsistencies; nothing else but a piece of self-contradiction. That is, it would be necessary to do a thing, and yet at the same time impossible. It is necessary by the constitution of the human nature that man do love a known good, and therefore most

* Preached October 11th, 1678.

a See Sermon V. p. 602.

of all the Supreme Good, which may be certainly known to be what it is, the absolutely best, the highest and most excellent Good, as hath been already shown; and yet by this argument it would be impossible to do this. So absurd is this maxim or pretence, that we are not to be affected with invisible things, and are under no obligation to love God, because we see him not! In the last place,

(7.) It would also be consequent from hence, that man must be a creature from the very first made only to be miserable. For it is impossible that sense should ever afford him relief against internal evils, or ever supply him with suitable and satisfying good. How then can he be otherwise than miserable?

Sense cannot afford him relief against internal evils, and no man can exempt himself from them, nor give himself any security that he shall never be invaded by such. Let there be never so great a calm, and according to his present apprehension let all things be never so well now; yet no man can assure himself, that he shall never meet with any inward pangs; that he shall never have cause to complain of the terrors of the Almighty besetting and overwhelming his soul, even ready to cut him off. These things have invaded as fortified breasts as any our age can afford; and no man knows when he is secure from them. And suppose they do invade a man, and conscience, molested by known and often repeated wickedness, does at length awake, and grow furious; pray where shall relief be had? Will the things of sense afford it? Will they ease such pangs, or work off agonies of this nature? In such a state of mind, for a man to feast himself with the objects of sense, or with that which pleases the eye, would be as impertinent as music to a broken leg, or fine clothes for the cure of a fever or an ulcerous body.

Nor can sense be the inlet to a man of any suitable or satisfying good. Let experience witness. To those who have all sensible enjoyments to the full, I would say, "Are you happy? Can you pretend to want any thing that sense can possibly supply you with to give pleasure to your spirits? Have you not what you would have? and yet can you say, All is full and well?" Undoubtedly what was the wise man's experience, would be every man's that were at leisure to consider the case; The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing, Eccles. i. 8. Sense, let it be gratified never so much, will still live unsatisfied, will be always craving and never contented. And therefore by this supposition it must needs be consequent, that man could be created for no other state than a state of misery. But how absurd were it to suppose, that the God of all goodness had made a creature, whom it should be impossible, even to himself, to make happy! (for it is impossible to his nature ever to make himself visible to an eye of flesh;) and that it should be only possible to terrify and torment his creature, but not to satisfy it and do it good! All these things do plainly evince that this excuse, to wit, we cannot love God because we see him not, is not only insufficient, but also most absurd. Then, say we, it ought not to be admitted as an excuse at all, and men are still under an indispensable obligation to the love of God notwithstanding.

But here it may possibly be suggested to the thoughts of some, "Admit it to be a duty to love God, although we cannot see him. We acknowledge that his invisibility renders it not impossible nor unreasonable to love him; and therefore we see the excuse is insufficient, and that many inconveniences and absurdities would ensue upon making it. But though it will be no entire excuse, yet it will sure be a great alleviation. And methinks the love of God in this world should not be so strictly urged; or though we should not live in the exercise of this duty, it should not be represented as so very great a crime." Therefore in answer to this we are to evince to you according to what was proposed,[b]

II. The greatness and heinousness of the sin of not loving God, notwithstanding this excuse that we do not see him; that it not only leaves it a sin still, but a most horrid one. And this will appear if we consider sundry things that I have to mention to you, which will show it to be injurious to ourselves and others, but chiefly to the blessed God himself, the great Author of our being.

b See page 662.

1. It cannot but be a most horrid thing, inasmuch as it is a most injurious distortion of our natural faculties. And therein it is injurious even to ourselves, to our own nature, and to God, the great Author and Parent of all nature, at once. For what do we think he has given us such faculties for, as we find the nature of man to be enriched with? Why hath he given us a mind, originally capable of knowing him, and that could once retain God in his knowledge; or a will that could then embrace him by love? It must needs be a very injurious perversion of our own faculties, to withhold and divert them from the prime, the best and highest use, whereof they were originally capable. And it is a very unaccountable thing that it should be thus, that man should have a power given him, originally ordained by the very designation of the God of nature to such and such purposes, and that it should never be applied thereunto. Not to love God is to set those faculties one against the other, and both of them against him.

2. It is a most vile debasing of ourselves, and a sordid depression of our own souls. By love we most strictly join ourselves to that which is the object of our love, and enter into the closest and most inward union with it. And what is it that we love, while we love not God? Are not the things which our love terminates upon, such as we should even be ashamed to think of separately and apart from him? What is there that is not base, when severed from God, or if we do not eye and consider him in it? We cannot conceive of any creature whatsoever, not even of the best and most noble, but as of a most horrid idol, if made the terminative object of our love, taken apart from God, and not considered or regarded in subordination to him who is supreme. And as to the mind and spirit of a man, there is nothing that so defiles it, that renders it so impure, as spiritual idolatry does. A vile and filthy thing, that the spirit of a man should be alienated from God, and prostituted to an idol! For we make any thing so, that we make the supreme object of our love. And so in effect we join ourselves to vanity, as idols are wont to be called; to that which is not only vain, but by this means made odious and loathsome.

And how deep a resentment should this be to us, that so excellent a thing as the spirit of man, God's own offspring, should suffer so vile a dejection! that it should be depressed and debased unto such meanness as to join itself to vanity and dirt, when it might be united with the God of glory, with the fulness and excellency of the Deity; yea, and when it is apparent, that by the original designation of that nature he hath given us, we were at first made capable thereof! For how came we by that love which we find in our nature? We plainly see we can love somewhat. While we love not God there is something or other that we do love; yea, and it is altogether impossible to our nature, not to love something or other. And hath he "planted a vineyard, and shall he not eat of the fruit thereof?" 1 Cor. ix. 7. He hath planted that love in our natures which we have made vile, by alienating it from him, and which may yet be made a sacred thing by being sanctified and turned upon God again. For it is the object and a suitableness thereunto, wherein consists the sanctification of the affections. And again,

3. Not to love God is a most merciless self-destruction. It is a divulsion of ourselves from him who is our life. It is to rend our souls from the Supreme Good, and so abandon ourselves by our own choice unto misery. How infamous among men is the name of a *felo de se*, one that hath done violence to his own life, and perisheth by his own hands! Though the nature of the thing doth exempt him from personal punishment in this world; yet you know that human laws do very severely animadvert upon, and punish the crime as far as the matter can admit. Juries are impanelled, a strict inquiry is made into the nature of the case. "What! did he do it voluntarily? was he *compos sui?* did he understand himself when he did it?" And if this be found to be the case; his goods are confiscated, and his memory branded with all the infamy that can be devised. And there is a great deal of reason for it. For the wrong that is done does not terminate upon himself, or his own relatives; but the prince is wronged, being robbed of a subject; and the community is wronged also

being deprived of one that otherwise might have been a useful member.

No man, as I remember Cicero somewhere speaks, *is born for himself*, *Nemo sibi nascitur*. Many claim a part in us besides ourselves, to wit, our prince, our country, and our friends. And when one destroys himself, many are injured by that self-destruction. And though some heathens have spoken of self-destruction as a very noble and generous act, yet Plato, who had more light, (speaking, as I remember, to this very case,) says, "We are here in the body like soldiers in a garrison, who are not to stir out without the general's order and direction; no more may any one dare to go out of the body, till the great Ruler of the world, who hath placed him there, gives him leave, or a call." And he appeals to men themselves. "If you" (saith he) "had a slave that should kill himself, would you not say he had wronged you, as well as himself, who had an interest in him and his service?" And what! do we think all this while that God's dominion is less over our spiritual and eternal being? over these souls of ours that are capable of being employed in his love and praise eternally? And is not this injurious to him, that men, who are naturally capable of all this, should yet throw themselves off from God, and cast themselves among a crew of damned spirits, whose business will be always to curse their Maker? Is not this, I say, an injury to the blessed God himself, who is the Author of that being and capacity to serve him, which we find ourselves possessed of? Moreover,

4. By not loving God we render ourselves altogether incapable of doing him any faithful service, upon which our great comfort and advantage, and his honour and glory, do at once depend. For God is glorified only by our voluntary action and devotedness to him. And is it not also more pleasant to serve God cheerfully than otherwise? but can we do that without loving him? And doth it not cast a most intolerable calumny upon him, that we should serve such a master unpleasantly, and with uncheerful service? Further,

5. We should, in breaking of this one law of love to God, break all. It is a breach of all the law at once, and so makes us incapable of doing God any service at all. For we can never serve him while we obey him not, and we can never obey him without love. We find that the whole law is summed up in it. Therefore we break the whole law of love to God in epitome, when we do not love him. All the law is fulfilled and comprehended in that one word *Love*. And though it is plain that the apostle when he says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 8—10. speaks there with a more direct reference to love to men, or one another; yet it is plain too that both branches may be reduced to one; for no man loves his brother or neighbour truly, if he do not love him for God's sake, and upon his account. That great law against murder in the book of Genesis, (ix. 6.) is founded upon this reason, "For in the image of God made he man:" so that it is God who is principally struck at, when one man murders another. Thus our Saviour made the summary of the law twofold, when he said, (to the lawyer, who had asked him, which was the great commandment,) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. xxii. 37—40.

The whole of our duty therefore centres in this one thing, love to God. This is the radical principle whence all is to proceed; and every command doth bind us with this reduplication, "Do this and love God, and do that as a lover of God," otherwise what we do is no more the same thing which the law enjoins, than the carcass of a man is the man. That which is the soul of the duty is wanting, and that is love. What signify, think you, those prayers to God, which are put up by one that does not love him? or of what avail is any other act of worship that is performed by such a one? and if we do any part of our duty which respects man, and that duty be not animated by the love of God, the love that one man can have to another in this case is nothing else but a sort of friendly intercourse among rebels, that have cut off themselves from their supreme Ruler; and take no more notice of his interest which he hath in common in them, but as they are confederated and joined in a conspiracy against him. Love among men, why do we talk of that? To love such men as have quite cut off themselves from God, as well as we ourselves have done, is only such a love as is among rebels, that treat one another kindly in a state of rebellion. To proceed,

6. It is a violation of the most merciful indulgent law, enjoining us a duty most agreeable to our own necessities, and the least toilsome and expensive of all others. How intolerable then is it to affront God, and even to do it with no pretence of advantage to ourselves, but greatly to our own disadvantage and loss! How merciful is the law of love! how direct a provision is there made in it for the necessity of man! Pray what shall we do, nay what can we do with ourselves, if we place not our love upon God? It may be we do not find our present need of him, as long as we find objects of sense courting and flattering us in our way; but do not we know that this world must break up, and this frame of earth and flesh in which we dwell dissolve! What then will become of him at last that will be found to have been no lover of God? How dreadful a thing is it for a soul to be stripped naked and to have nothing to enjoy? It cannot enjoy God, because it never loved him. For sure, what we love not, we can never enjoy.

Therefore it was a most merciful law that said unto us, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." It is a law teaching us to be happy, and to solace ourselves in the rich plenitude of Divine goodness. Our necessity doth at once urge us, and the Divine goodness invite us, here to place our love. This is the true solution of Plato's riddle, "That love is the daughter of Pluto and Penia." For it plainly appears that the rich plenty of Divine goodness, and the poverty and indigence of the poor creature that cannot otherwise dispose of itself, are the true parents of love.

This is a thing also that will cost us nothing. To love God therefore is the most unexceptionable thing in the world. It is what we are capable of in the worst external circumstances. If a man be never so poor he may yet love God. If he be sick and infirm, if he be never so mean, if he have no estate, no interest, or be never so little in repute, he is yet capable of loving God. This he can do any where, in any place, in any desert, or cave, or upon the most afflictive bed of languishing. There is no pretence against loving God, let a man's case be what it will, or supposed to be. It is therefore a most intolerable thing to offend against a law that provides so directly for our happiness and most urgent necessities. It is such a law, an obedience to which will cost us nothing, neither can there be the least pretence of gaining any thing by the neglect of it. The sin is therefore the more horrid; and foul and shameful it is to disobey in a case wherein we have nothing to say for ourselves. And again,

7. It is a direct contradiction to our own light, and the common sentiments of mankind. For this is no disputable thing, whether we are to love God, yea or no. There are many things in religion, and many things more that are affixed to it, that make much matter of disputation, and great ventilating of arguments there is *pro* and *con*, this way and that; but pray who can tell how to form an argument against the love of God? To deny this is to affront our own light, and that of the world in common; for there is no man that will profess himself to be no lover of God. Did you ever meet with any one that would profess enmity to him? And the soul of a man cannot be indifferent in this case. It must either be a friend or an enemy, must either love or hate. God is not indifferent, or a mere nothing to us, and how should we be affected to him, if not by love? And we further add,

8. It is a most unnatural wickedness to the Parent of that being which we are each of us furnished with, to disaffect our own Original. That men should disaffect him from whom they immediately sprang, and whose image they expressly bear, is, I say, a most unnatural crime. Suppose there were a son to be found that never could love his father, and always hated the womb that bare him; what a strange prodigy in nature would he be thought'

But is not this infinitely more prodigious, to disaffect the entire and supreme Author of our own life and being, of which parents are but partial, or at most but subordinate, authors. And in the

Last place, not to add more, it is blasphemy against the Divine goodness. It is a practical blasphemy. It is the most emphatical way of denying God. For as the man that does not believe him, denieth his truth and makes him a liar, so by manifest parity, he that doth not love him denieth his goodness, a great deal more significantly than can be done by words. For men many times earnestly spe· k what is not their settled judgment, and what they are afterwards ready to retract. But how horrid a thing is this, that a man by a continued course and series of practice should discover this to be the fixed sense of his soul, that God is not worthy of his love! that a race of reasonable creatures should bear their joint testimony against the great and blessed God, the common Author and Cause of all being, that he is not worthy of the love of any of them! For we practically say so while we live in the neglect of this duty. What do we talk of words in this case, when deeds and our constant practice do more significantly and directly speak? and what doth the course of a man speak, who loves not God, but this, that he is not to be loved? Therefore sure, not to love God, though we see him not, is not only a sin, but a most monstrous and horrid one.

We should go on to make some practical inferences from all that has been said on this part of our subject, that we might thereby the more closely apply all; but of this hereafter.

SERMON IX.*

In speaking to the second part of our subject, we have largely insisted in showing you, that our not seeing God is no excuse for our not loving him. We have shown particularly, that it is insufficient, and also very absurd, to be alleged as an excuse; and that it is not only a sinful omission, but a most horrid wickedness, not to live in the exercise of love to God, notwithstanding this excuse that we cannot see him.

It now remains, as we promised in our last, to deduce from the whole some practical inferences, by which (if God will so direct his word) all may be applied, and brought home with the greater pungency to our own hearts. And,

1. We may hence take notice of the insolent wickedness of the world, that they so generally agree to confine the little love that is left in it to one another, and to exclude the blessed God. That men do not love God speaks them very wicked: that they continue in the neglect of this duty, without any excuse, speaks the insolency of their wickedness. While they have not a cloak left them, not a colourable pretence, nor any thing to say for themselves that is so much as plausible, yet they continue their course of excluding God out of their hearts, and live as if they owed him nothing, and had no concern at all with him.

That men do not love God is a thing that cannot be excused, as you have heard; and it is as little capable of denial, as of excuse. The matter is open and manifest. The general face and aspect of this world showeth, how little there is of the love of God in it. The very show of its countenance speaks it plainly. Men do in this matter even declare their sin as Sodom. They openly testify to one another that they are God's enemies. So that every man that runs, may read how the matter commonly is with men in this respect.

Alas, how little doth God's interest signify in this world! this shows how little he is beloved. How little is his interest valued, in comparison of that which is merely secular, and human! We have instanced to you already in this and many other things, for the eviction of the matter of fact in this case. As for the matter of right and wrong in the case, you have fully seen, from the demonstration which hath been given you, that our not seeing, excuseth us not from loving God. Nothing can be more plain, than (as we noted heretofore) that although too little respect be paid in the most important matters to human laws, yet there is a great deal less paid to divine. Men are more prone to be observant of the laws of men than of God. But there is no true obedience to the one or the other which doth not proceed from love, so far as it is true. We are to owe nothing to any man but love, or what may spring from thence. It was the complaint you know of old, "the statutes of Omri are kept," Micah vi. 16. A very scrupulous care, as is intimated and complained of, there was to observe them; while the statutes of God were neglected, or not so much respected among those that professed his name.

Yea, and which is more than that; how much more frequent are the instances that may be assigned of laws made directly against God's interest, and the precepts of the first table, than against those of the second! The world in the several successive ages of it, hath been full of instances of laws made for polytheism, infidelity, idolatry, the worshipping of false gods, and the abolishing, or very much depraving, the worship of the true. But when did you ever hear of laws made for theft, false-witness bearing, and the like? so as to oblige men under certain penalties to invade each other's interests, as they generally make bold with God. We have heard and read very frequently of men persecuted even to the death by laws, for not burning incense to idols, for not denying of Christ, and the like; but when did you ever hear of a man exposed to such penalties for not stealing, for not cozening, not defrauding this, or that, or the other man? So apparent is it, that men can express somewhat of tenderness one to another, in respect of their own private and secular interest; when, in the mean time, there is no concern at all for the common interest of the Lord of all this world. So that what interest is in the world is shut up almost entirely among men themselves. And though there is too little regard to that interest; yet they confine what there is among one another, excluding the blessed God from having any part or share in their love at all.

And truly, sirs, I fear we are too little concerned about this sad case. We do not consider this matter as it deserves, nor with that solemnity that it challenges. We are not so affected about the rights and interest of him, whom we call our God, as we ought to be. It doth not pain us to the heart as it should, to think how little God is made of in his own creation, and among the works of his own hands. We sometimes, when we hear the matter spoken of, say it is a sad case, but we know not how to help it, and so pass it very slightly over. But do not we indeed know how to help it? And should not this affect us ten thousand times more, when it is a case that we can only lament? Sure, methinks, at least we should do that if we can do no more. But how prone are we to alleviate the matter by considering it as a common case. "Oh! this is a matter of observation every day. It may be seen in every place, that there is little of the love of God to be found among men." And is it a common case? Is it not then a thousand times more horrid that it should be so common? If there had been but one apostate creature from God in all the world, one person of whom it might be said, "He doth not love God," how shocking and horrid would this man look in our eye! But is it not inconceivably worse and more horrid, that there should be so general a revolt from God? and that the hearts and love of his poor creatures are so averted without cause, and wickedly alienated from him all the world over?

2. We further collect hence, that the conviction of the unreconciled part of the world must needs be very clear and easy in the great day. When this shall be the common case brought into trial, (as indeed it will be with every man,) "Was he a lover of God, or was he not?" how easy and clear, I say, must the conviction needs be, since, as you have heard, it is a matter that admits of no excuse? If this be a matter not defensible at our own bar, among ourselves, when we controvert the matter one with another; how easily and gloriously will Divine justice triumph in the eviction of his right, and of the wrong that hath been done him by his creatures in this matter! Behold a whole

* Preached October 11th, 1676.

race of creatures, originally capable of his love and communion, gone off from him with one consent! alienated in heart and spirit from the life and love of God! transmitting their enmity and disloyalty from age to age, from generation to generation! and, in a word, emboldening themselves in wickedness against him, because they see him not; and, as they vainly think, because he sees not them.

And yet in the mean time it is very plain, that men might know him if they would; for they live, and move, and have their whole subsistence in and by him. He is not far from any one of them. He supplies them with breath from moment to moment. They entirely owe themselves, their being, and preservation, to an every where present and apprehensible Deity. Yet they do not, neither will they, know him; and in this voluntary ignorance they sufficiently show, that they love him not. How glorious then will the triumphs of justice be, when this case comes to be stated! when this shall be the charge brought against men, be they who they will, or whatsoever they have been in other respects, that they have been no lovers of God.

3. We are hence to note and admire the wonderful patience and bounty of God to this wretched world. How admirable are the riches of his goodness, and his sparing and sustaining mercy! that the treasures of wrath are shut up, and the treasures of bounty opened, to a world, where he hath, upon the matter, but little or no love! One would wonder that this world should not have been in flames many an age ago, considering how enmity against God hath been transmitted from age to age. But how much more reason have we to wonder, that he so concerns himself about, and takes such care for, a company of wretched miscreants, among whom he is not valued! Still his treasures are opened to us! his sun shines, his rain falls, and in ways of grace and mercy he leaves not himself without witness, in that he is continually doing us good, "Giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness;" (Acts xiv. 17.) though in the mean time men will not know who feeds them and maintains their life, and parcels out their breath to them, every moment, from time to time.

Surely it becomes us deeply to adore that patience and bounty, that are so continually exercised towards such creatures, who are here shut up in the dark, as it were, from one day to another. God appears not to them; they see him not, and in the mean time agree in this, that they will have no thoughts of him, but have him in perpetual oblivion. Yet all the while they have natural powers and faculties, which if employed in the inquiry, might easily inform them, that they did not make themselves; that they have not their life in their own hands, neither can they prolong it at their own pleasure, inasmuch as all of us "live, and move, and have our being in God," Acts xvii. 28. However, they content themselves with their ignorance of him; and yet he hath sustained the world, and upheld the pillars of it, when sometimes it hath been ready to dissolve, and burst asunder, with that weight of wickedness that hath overwhelmed it for a time.

We ought surely in the contemplation of this to say, "How far are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts!" Men sometimes, when they receive but a petty injury, and an apparent wrong from another, are presently wondering that the earth doth not swallow up the man that hath done them this palpable wrong; that vengeance spares him; or that God suffers such a one to live. Oh! why do not we turn all our wonder this way; that God spares those that are perpetually affronting him! making it as it were the whole business of their life to testify to all the world, how little they care for him that made them! We ought then to consider with great admiration that vast and immense goodness, which is so indulgent to men all this while. Again,

4. We may hence learn too, the absolute necessity and proper business of the Redeemer; how great need there was of a Redeemer, and what work and business he has to do on the behalf of sinful men. We may learn, I say, how great need there was of such a one. For who can stand under the weight of this charge, to have lived days, and months, and years in this world, destitute of the love of God? Any man that apprehends the horror of the thing, and knows how inexcusable a wickedness it is, and how horrid, notwithstanding any pretence of excuse, cannot but be greatly affected by it; methinks paleness must possess his face, and pining his heart, to be subject to so heavy a charge, and also liable to be convicted of not oving God. And then, one would think, it should be easy to understand what need there was of a Redeemer. The crea on would not be able to sustain this burden, to have creatures in it that love not God, and were disaffected to their own Original. If this guilt were to be par elled out among the creation, how soon would it make all things fly asunder! and how impossible would it be for things to subsist and hold together! How great then was the need of a Redeemer in this case!

And we may see what his business hereupon must be also; that is, both to expiate the guilt of such as have not loved God, and to procure that they may do so for the time to come. And these two we are to consider not as separate and apart from another. We are not to fancy or imagine, that Christ hath only this to do, namely, to procure pardon for our not having loved God. Sure he is to procure grace also, that we may and effectually shall do so for the future, or else he will profit us but little. If we have to do with Christ at all, if ever we receive any benefit at all by him, it must be this double benefit in conjunction; not the one separate from the other.

The imagination runs in common among men, as if Christ's business as Mediator was only to reconcile God to man, and not man to God. But how expressly doth the Scripture speak of this part too! You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, Col. i. 21. He must reconcile us to God. And therefore the apostle again saith, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. v. 19. To take out of the hearts of men the enmity that is reigning every where against God, and bring them into love with him, is the very business of the Gospel.

There did not need a Gospel to be preached to heaven, to incline God to man; but there was a necessity of dispensing one on earth to men, to incline them to God. If the business had only been to reconcile God to man, there had been no need of a Gospel at all. The affair of our redemption might have been transacted between the Father and the Son, in God's eternal counsel. Christ might have died as he did, and the ends of his dying be never known to us, were it not that this was the means, that the Spirit of Christ was to work by, in order to overcome men's hearts, and slay the enmity in them, not to be done by any other way. And shall any of us think, that Christ came into the world to procure the salvation of those, that loved not God? This were to think, that he came into the world to banish the love of God out of it.

Therefore we must know, that if ever we be the better for Christ, it must be both in his expiating our guilt, for not loving God, and in removing our enmity, that our love may be set upon him, our hearts joined with him, and engaged in communion and fellowship with him, in our future course. For this is the business of a Mediator between God and man: to salve the breach on both sides; to make a mutual agreement between both parties; to vindicate God's right, and so to act the part of a just Redeemer, and to procure man's righteousness, which is the part of a merciful Redeemer. This was his thought: "This case must be either redressed in men by working a change in them, or else vindicated upon them. This he is obliged to as Redeemer. The Father hath given all judgment (John v. 22.) into his hand: and, as it were, deposited his rights there, to be vindicated by him, or restored.

5. Learn hence the generous nature of Divine love in men. The love that we owe, and that good souls do live in the exercise of, and actually bear to God, of how noble and generous a nature, I say, is it! Their love is of so refined and solid a nature, that it breaks through the whole sphere of sense, and flies above all visible things, and pitcheth upon an invisible object. There it terminates, and takes up its residence. It never rests till it has flown up thither, and seeks no excuse from the duty of love to God, merely because he is invisible. It despiseth to be so excused, and neglects and disregards the dictates of sense

in the case. This is the genius of Divine love, and the inward spiritual sense of the new creature, whereof this love is the heart, and life, and soul. "What! shall external sense impose upon me, and tell me what is fit for me to love, and what not? What! shall I love no higher than so? no higher than a brute?" Therefore how much more noble and excellent a spirit is that of the truly good man, than the men of this world are of? and how excellent is the spirit of Divine love, which is in the saints, above that which is earthly and sensual! Let us believe this therefore, and be convinced, that the spirit that is peculiar to godly men is quite another thing from a vulgar and mundane spirit; and its strain and genius different from that of the men of this world. These love only what they see, and think they are excused from loving any but sensible objects. But, sayst he good man, "When I have seen and viewed all the good and all the excellency that this sensible creation can offer to my view, I must have something unseen for my love to pitch upon, which is beyond all this." Therefore a gracious spirit is an excellent spirit. It cannot grovel upon this earth. It must ascend above all visible things, and get up to that God who is invisible.

6. Since we are so strictly obliged to the love of God though we cannot see him; what reason have we to charge and condemn ourselves, and even loathe and abhor ourselves, that we have loved him so little, and that so small a part of our life can be said to have been spent in this divine exercise! It is high time for us to understand the state of our case, and to consider it in this respect: though it is very much to be feared that it is but little considered; for alas, how generally do people carry it as if they thought themselves innocent in this point! After all the injury that has been done to God by our not loving him, this is the most intolerable aggravation, that we should think ourselves innocent therein, and maintain that temper of spirit as if we apprehended all was well. And how plain is it that it will not enter into the souls of men, that they are guilty creatures before the Lord on this account, that they have not loved him?

If a man had secretly and privily been guilty of the death of another on such a day, and the matter was closely covered up, and nobody knew it; yet how would his own thoughts dog him and accuse him at night! The blood of that man would so cry in his conscience, that certainly he would have but a hard matter of it to compose himself to quiet peaceful repose. Why, men in not loving God are guilty of deicide, as much as they can be, or as far as their power extends. It is an attempt against God. It is saying in their hearts, "No God!" For it is a plain denial of his goodness, and therefore of his being. It is as much a denial of his goodness, as infidelity is of his truth. What a strange thing is it, that men can be so much at peace with themselves, can pass over whole days one after another, yet no such thing as the love of God to be found among them! and at night can sleep and rest, and their hearts never smite them for it.

Methinks it is strange that men can make so slight a matter of breaking all laws at once, as you have heard this is of not loving God; of subverting the whole frame of the Divine government over us. For how do we obey it in any thing, who comport not with the first principle of obedience, namely, love to God? Oh that men should be guilty of a more horrid fact, than it would be, if it were in their power, to turn all things out of order, and yet not only be able to rest, but even to think themselves innocent all the while!

These things, in my apprehension, do make a most wonderful conjuncture, where they happen to meet together; these four things especially,—that it should be so plain to every man that he ought to love God;—that it should be so plainly demonstrable, as to the most, that they do not love God;—that it should be so confessedly a foul and horrid thing not to love him, even by every man's acknowledgment; and yet,—that so many can be guilty of this horrid crime all their lives, and yet live as if all was well, and they were innocent all the while.—All these things make, I say, an amazing conjuncture. I appeal to you if they do not.

But that none of us may be so stupid under such guilt as this, let us, since we cannot excuse it, freely condemn ourselves. For who is there among us but must be forced to acknowledge, that the love of God is too little exercised, or is very faint and languid among us? Methinks we should hate ourselves for this, that we do not love God. It ought to be looked upon as a frightful thing, a monstrous indisposition in us. We should then in our own thoughts commune with ourselves, and reason thus: "Why, what a creature am I! what a strange creature am I! of how amazing a composition! I have an understanding about me. I know that which is good and what is best. I know the Author of all goodness and excellency, must needs be the highest excellency and goodness himself. I have also love in my nature, which I can employ upon inferior things, and which I confess to be of unspeakably less, and of diminutive goodness. How monstrously strange is it then that I cannot feel daily emotions of love in my heart to God! that I cannot find my heart to beat for him! that every thought of him is not pleasant to me! How amazing and wonderful is this!" Why sure it is a very befitting posture, that we should be covered with shame and confusion before the Lord; and be even wallowing in our own tears, lamenting that there should be so stupid and cool an ascent in our hearts towards him: that we can spend whole days without him; give him no visits, and receive none that are of concernment to us; and in a word, lead our life as it were without God in the world.

It should make us ashamed to read that precept of a heathen emperor,[a] who expresses himself to this effect, "You must lead your lives with God. Then," says he, "you will be said to lead your life with God, when you approve yourselves well-pleased with every thing that he dispenseth to you, and take all kindly at his hands; and when also you obey that leader and ruler" (he can mean nothing, but the conscience that is in man) "which he has set to be the guide of your actions. So shall you lead your lives with God, and have daily converse with him." And now to have daily our conversation in the world without God, and yet have no scruple about it, nor remorse upon it, is a marvellous thing; especially among us, who hear of him and from him so often, and know that we must be happy in him at last, or else eternally miserable. In the

Last place, since our not seeing God cannot excuse us from loving him, how much we are concerned to see to it that it be no hinderance or impediment to this our duty of loving God. And that it may not, it is very necessary that it be some way or other supplied. Since it is impossible for us to see God, we ought to consider seriously with ourselves, whether there be not something or other that may serve us instead of the sight of God, and be a means of our living in his love. And here I had several things in my thoughts to have hinted to you, and intended to have gone through them at this time; but I must leave them to the next opportunity.

SERMON X.*

SINCE it is necessary, that our not seeing God should be so supplied, as that we may be capable of loving him, notwithstanding; I now proceed to give some directions, which I hope will be of use to us in this great and important matter. As,

1. Let us fix the apprehension deep in our souls, of his certain necessary existence, and supreme excellence. Our sight doth not serve us to the loving of any thing, otherwise than as it is a means to beget an apprehension in our minds of the loveliness of it. Sight is in no case the immediate inducement of love, but only as it is ministerial and subservient to the nobler powers of the mind. And if by any other means than by seeing, we can come to apprehend so much concerning the blessed God, to wit, his most necessary existence, and supreme excellency, we shall

a Antoninus.

* Preached October 8th, 1676.

not be at a loss then for an apt medium, by which our love is to be excited in us towards him.

These two things are the same in effect with those that the apostle tells us we ought to be assured of, in order to our coming to God with acceptance, namely, that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. xi. 6. We may easily understand how he is a rewarder, if we compare this passage with what is said to Abraham, I am thy exceeding great reward, Gen. xv. 1. God is at once both a rewarder, and reward to those whose hearts are towards him. He is a rewarder by communicating himself, and not by giving rewards alien and diverse from himself. And it is necessary that we be assured, that he both is, and that he is in this sense a rewarder, as being in himself the highest excellency, or the supreme and best good. For without a persuasion concerning both these, it is intimated, that we cannot come unto him in an acceptable manner.

Now loving him is one way of coming to him. It is that by which the soul moveth to him in desire, and then rests in him in delight. There can be no such motion in the soul towards God, without this double persuasion concerning him; namely, of his certain existence, and highest excellency, as our terminative good. And you have heard that we may be as sure of both these, as of any thing that we see with our eyes. For if our eyes tell us, that any thing is in being, our minds tell us as certainly, that there is an original being. And if we can be any way sure, that there is such a thing as goodness and excellency in the world; we may be as sure, that there is an original excellency, an original good, which must needs be the supreme good, and can be no where, but in the original supreme Being. For goodness and excellency are not nothing, and therefore cannot come out of nothing, but must proceed from the same fountain, from whence all being comes. We are not more sure of any thing that our eyes inform us of, than we shall be of this, if we do but consider, and use our understanding in the case.

So that we should endeavour once to fix the apprehension of these things, as being most certainly true; and from our very souls should bless God, that we are at a certainty in these things; that we do not feel the ground loose under us, but are in this respect on firm ground, when we affirm that God most necessarily is and is the highest and most excellent good. And being once sure of this, it would be very unreasonable to be recalling this matter into doubt, or to be perpetually moving questions and disputes concerning it in our minds. It is what we may be as sure of, as that there is a world in being, or that any thing is, that we ourselves are, who being nearest to ourselves, may be surest of our own being.

And it would make strange confused work in the world, if in reference to all the actions of man, they should be ever moving disputes about them, whether they really are or are not. As if a man could not tell how to eat, but he must fall a doubting presently, "Is this real food before me, or is it not? or am I awake to eat it, yea or no?" Or as if he could not tell how to converse with any one, about never so important a business, but he must fall a disputing, "Is this a real man, or but a spectre? may it not be only the umbra of a man?" In short, what could be done, what business transacted in the world, if, about such plain matters, doubts must be perpetually raised?

Every man that hath understanding, as hath been said, may be at as great certainty concerning the existence of the supreme and first Being, as of any thing whatever. Nay, a great deal more, because his existence is supremely necessary. So that if I confine certainty to the eye, then I am sure of nothing but what I see. But I am certain that God always was of himself, and therefore is necessarily; and so, not to be, must to him be simply impossible. This, therefore, would be one great supply to our not seeing him, once to make the matter plain and clear, that he exists, and that he is the most excellent and supreme good. Which would be a great deal in our way, towards the exercise of love to God, though we do not see him.

2. It will concern us much to use our thoughts in being conversant with other invisible objects. For certainly, minds and hearts that are continually busied about things of sense only, will be but in a very defective capacity, at all times, to converse with the invisible God. It needs a very refined temper of mind to behold him with the intellectual eye, and thereupon to love and embrace the blessed glorious God. And as while we converse with things that are vain, our minds are vain; while with things that are earthly, our minds are earthly, and bear the impress and image of those things with which we have most to do; so, if we did but converse with spiritual things, or those which are above the reach of sense, it would be a means to make our minds and hearts grow more spiritual, and consequently more fit for the love and converse of the eternal, supreme, invisible Spirit.

It is a mean base thing, since God hath furnished our natures with a thinking power, to use our thoughts only about those things that lie in common to us with brute creatures. "Can I, have I, a power to mind higher and nobler objects, and will I so vilely debase myself as not to mind them! to mind only things that are earthly, drossy, and terrene! By this means I shall always keep myself in an incapacity to have to do with God."

We should therefore consider with ourselves, that as we have faculties by which we are rendered capable of conversing with men and visible things; so we have faculties too in our natures, whereby we are capable of conversing with things that are not visible, and that are of a higher nature. It is easy to turn all the things of this visible state into a dusky shadow to ourselves. We can clothe all the world with darkness, in a moment, only by shutting our eyes. And therefore as our eyes would signify nothing to visible things, if we did not use them; so nor will our thoughts signify any thing in reference to the invisible world, unless we employ them upon their more proper and peculiar objects.

We should also recollect with ourselves, that there is such a thing as an invisible world, which is the best and noblest part of the creation of God. We ourselves, as to the better part of our natures, belong to it. Therefore we should not behave as strangers, and unrelated to that world. We should consider how glorious the invisible world is, and recount who are its inhabitants, what are the affairs and pleasures, the excellencies and ornaments of those inhabitants. Let us think with ourselves, what vast numberless myriads there are of glorious spirits, creatures of God, that are composed all of mind and love, whose perpetual business and employment is to behold and adore the great Father of spirits, the PATERNAL MIND, or REASON, as the heathen have called him, the original intellect, that is every where, and ALL IN ALL.

We should think with ourselves, that the affairs of those innumerable multitudes of glorious spirits, and their pleasures and delights, are the same. Their business is to be always beholding the Divine glory; and by adoration and praise to return it to him, reflecting it back again to its own Original. We should think with ourselves, what the lovely ornaments and excellencies are of those blessed inhabitants: we should consider their vast knowledge, their mighty power, their pure holiness, their profound humility, the benignity, love, and serenity, that are every where to be found among those happy beings.

And when we have thought and considered all this, then let us ask ourselves, "Why am I a stranger to this invisible world?" For indeed we are strangers to it, while we are unrelated to God, and his Christ. But this is not our necessity, but our great folly, that we continue in so distant and unrelated a state. We are naturally aliens, strangers, foreigners; but there are overtures made to us by Christ, to become of the household and family of God, Eph. ii. 19. And this family is made up of heavenly ones, though part be in heaven and part on earth. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, besides his natural, hath an acquired dominion and lordship over the whole of it. By him were all things made, both visible and invisible; (Col. i. 16—21.) and even besides that, by the blood of his cross, he is become the Head over all principalities, and powers, and thrones, and dominions; whether they be in heaven, or earth, or under the earth.

So that if we be of those who profess themselves to be Christians, and are united to him, we are come to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, Heb. xii. 22, 23. We are actually joined as members of that body, which is all but one community of glo-

rious creatures above and holy ones here below, in whom the beginnings and first principles of the new creature, and the work of sanctification, are to be found. So that we may again demand of ourselves and ask, "Why do we estrange ourselves, and carry it as if we were unrelated to those invisible creatures?" Those blessed spirits are continually mingling with us, if we will believe the Divine testimony concerning them. The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them, Psal. xxxiv. 7. And what are all the angels, but ministering spirits sent forth for the good and service of them who are heirs of salvation? Heb. i. 14. They are conversant in our assemblies, as some understand that passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians, where the woman is directed to have power over her head, that is, a vail, in token of her subjection to power, "because of the angels;" (1 Cor. xi. 10.) though some understand this passage otherwise. And again, more expressly it is said, that unto powers and principalities in heavenly places is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10.

Therefore in that we do not entertain more frequent thoughts, and exercise our minds more about what the Scriptures reveal in this matter, we are certainly injurious to ourselves. We keep back our minds from being clarified from earth and sensible things, by which they might be raised up to the honour and advantage of being employed about the blessed God himself. For if we were filled, all the day long, with becoming thoughts of the state and condition of the affairs of the inhabitants of the invisible world, how easy were it to fix upon God the great Ruler of all, the Father of spirits!

And being of the same community, making but one society with those blessed creatures, as being under the same Head with them, we make a great schism in the body if we break off ourselves from them, and their employments and affairs, and involve ourselves with things that are visible, and the objects of sense. Of all men in the world, the sensualist is the greatest schismatic. He breaks himself off from all the affairs and concernments of the invisible world; and wraps himself in this narrow sphere, as one quite cut off from God, and all that are more immediately conversant with him. We, I say, quite rend ourselves from that body, that happy society, if we do not apply ourselves more to mind the concernments of that other world, and to have our spirits, thoughts, and affections, exercised and carried up thither. And again,

3. It is necessary in order to supply our not seeing God, that we most firmly believe the report and testimony that is given of him in the Gospel of his Son. What we cannot know by our own eyes, we must be beholden for the knowledge of to the report of others. And it is the business of the Gospel to make a report of God to us, and the errand of his Son into the world was to bring us this report. He who best knew him, and from eternity was in his bosom, "hath declared him;" (John i. 18.) and that on purpose for our relief in this case, because "no man hath seen God at any time." Since therefore God is invisible, and we are creatures that depend so much upon sense, he "hath spoken to us by his Son, the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. So that it is by no mean one that he hath sent us an account of himself, though we cannot see him.

All reports signify as they are believed. They signify nothing where no credit is given to them. But what should induce us to doubt, whether the revelation which Christ hath made to us of God, in his word, be true or no? What should make us imagine, that God should misrepresent himself? What! doth he need to beguile us, his creatures, whom he hath entirely in his power? the works of his hands, whom he can wink and beckon into nothing? Do you think he means to beguile us with specious representations of himself, otherwise than as the matter really is?

Therefore we should thus consider with ourselves. "We have not indeed seen God, nor is he liable to so mean a thing as human sight. But we have an express discovery of him by his own Son, who came upon this very errand: and what he has said was not casually, and on the by, as words dropped by chance; but he came for this very end, that he might acquaint the world what God is, and give to men an account of him, since he is not to be seen with eyes of flesh." And sure, upon the account we have of this blessed and glorious Object, he must be acknowledged to be the most lovely Object. We are not then at a loss for an object of our love, if we will but believe the record and testimony of the blessed God in his own word; and take it as a revelation from heaven with so merciful a design. How awful an acquiescence therefore doth that challenge and command! So that our hearts should readily suggest to us, that it is the greatest profaneness, if we do not with reverence and veneration admit that testimony.

In what honour and veneration had those poor deluded creatures the image that was said to have come down from Jupiter! Acts xix. 35. Why, God's own word is his own lively image, a true representation of himself, which certainly came down from himself. He hath sent many on this message; his own Son, his prophets, and apostles, on purpose to draw men into communion and fellowship with himself. These things, saith St. John, are written, that we might have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1 John i. 3. And then he goes on in his epistle to tell them, that the message which the apostles heard of him and declared unto them, was this—that God is light, and God is love, 1 John i. 5, &c. Surely then such a Being is the most worthy of our esteem and love; and the message sent to men is most worthy of their acceptance, to wit, that such a God is offered to them for their God. Thus men are acquainted with him by the revelation they have of him in the Gospel, that so they may be drawn into a communion and fellowship with him, the life and soul of which is love.

4. It is necessary, that we bend ourselves much to contemplate and study the nature of God, according to the discovery we have of him in his revelation. That which we do know and believe, makes an impression upon us only as it is improved by our thoughts; as it is considered or not considered. A great many things lie asleep in our souls, and signify nothing to us, for want of actual thought. At certain times and seasons, therefore, we should say to ourselves; "Well! I will now go on purpose, and sit down, and meditate upon God. This shall be the business of the present hour." For surely nothing can with higher right lay claim to our entire thoughts, than the Author of all. And it is a strange piece of negligence, that he, with whom we have such great concerns, and who is our All in all, should be so seldom the subject of our solemn, designed, purposed meditation; that the thoughts of God should be casualties with us; that we should think of him only now and then by chance, and never find a time, wherein we may say to ourselves, "I will now on set purpose think of God."

How doth this correspond with the practice of the saints, who had communion with him of old? as we find the Psalmist intimating, that he thought of God on his bed, and meditated on him in the night watches, Psal. lxiii. 6. I would not here propound to you the indulging or gratifying a vain curiosity, inquiring into the unrevealed things of God; but would recommend to you the study of those plain intelligible attributes of his, that are obvious to the understandings of the generality of men, because the Divine Being is not capable of a strict and rigid definition. These are enough to suggest such a notion of him, as renders him an object worthy of our love and worship; while a multitude of things may be supposed concerning God, which it is not necessary for us to be acquainted with.

Consider then his wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, and the like, which are his communicable attributes; and add to these the incommunicable properties of his eternity, his immensity, his self-sufficiency, his self-subsistence, his necessary existence, and so we have an account of God. And then how excellent and glorious an Object both of love and worship have we before us! a Being of himself originally perfect; who is essential wisdom, goodness, love, truth, righteousness, and holiness. In what a transport should we be upon such a representation of God! We have his name often in our mouths when it is with us but as an empty sound; as if that great and venerable name signified nothing. He is near in our mouths, and ears, but far from our hearts; and then no wonder he is so little loved all the while. But would we once admit to have our souls possessed with the apprehension of the

import of that mighty and venerable name, which was given to Moses; how would it engage us to bow our heads and worship him, who is "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty," Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Our Lord told the Samaritan woman, "Ye worship ye know not what," John iv. 22. So do they, who make his worship nothing else but a ceremonious compliment; the mere bowing of the knee, and the honouring him with the lip. But if it be the worship of love, it is impossible then that we should worship we know not what. For the interior faculties of the soul, as to love and desire, cannot be wrought upon by a shadow. They must be moved by something substantial, and set on work by something which really exists. When therefore we hear the name of God spoken, how should it make us stoop and bow before him! and into what an awful and pleasing commotion should it put all the powers of our souls at once! But to go a whole day, and forget God; and to let many days pass, without ever choosing a time to think of him on purpose, is a great iniquity. And while that iniquity abounds, the love of such must needs grow cold. And then again,

5. We must take heed, that we entertain no horrid and dismal thoughts of God, and that we believe nothing that is contrary to his own revelation of himself. Take heed lest the belief of a God suggest only a guilty enslaving fear. I mean not the fear of reverence, which the angels owe and pay; but that fear of horror, which is most proper to devils, and is the product of a diabolical faith. "The devils believe and tremble," James ii. 19. They believe and are full of horror, as that word φρίσσουσι signifies; do even shiver with the belief they have concerning God. As "perfect love casteth out fear," (1 John iv. 18.) so such fear will always put out love. For a fear proceeding from gross and horrid mispersuasions concerning God, must needs stifle all dutiful, ingenuous, loyal affection to God.

It is the great art of the devil to possess men with the apprehension, if it be possible, that their case is the same with his own, that so thereby they may make it their own. If the devils can once persuade men, that God is as unreconcilable to them, as he is to themselves, who sinned with open eyes, without a tempter, and all at once in their own proper persons; if they can, I say, but make men believe this, then it is a most easy thing to keep the love of God from ever having any entrance into the soul. It is natural to hate those whom we fear or dread; therefore, I say, the fallen angels believe and tremble, believe, and are full of horror.

But, do you believe, and bless God? Believe him actually reconciled, if you find your hearts do yield to him. Believe him willing to be at peace. Believe him when he testifies, that whosoever cometh to him shall in no wise be cast out, John vi. 18. Believe him saying, "Though thou hast forgotten me, and hast set up thyself to be thine own idol, and hast been perpetually affronting me; yet do thou but accept my Son, and of pardon in and through him, and I will make thee my friend, my associate, and my son." Do but believe this, and try if it be in your power not to love him. This faith will certainly work by love. But take heed of believing what God hath never said; and what the destroyer of souls would make you believe he hath said. For whatsoever thoughts tend to the making him unlovely, or not amiable in your eyes, have them far from you. And,

6. Make him your own by an entire and cheerful choice, and acceptance of him for your Lord and your God. How mightily doth relation, interest, and property command love! You cannot see him, it is true, but you may choose and apprehend him for your God; which relation, once understood, will happily supply the want of seeing him. Surely you would love your own child, your own father, your own husband, or wife, though you were born blind and could never see them. How many are apt to say, when they observe any thing lovely, in such or such a relation in another family; for instance, a dutiful, ingenuous child; "O had I such a one, how should I love him!" Why, you have an amiable description of your God; and do not your hearts say within you, "If he were my God, how should I love him?" And why is he not your God? he offers himself to be yours, and has put no harder terms upon you, than that you receive him for your God. Comply then with his righteous law, "Thou shalt have no other god but me," Exod. xx. 3. Say therefore, "Thou shalt be my God wholly and alone." As every covenant is made up by a mutual stipulation, so his willingness and yours make the bargain. He hath declared his own willingness, do you but make out yours, and the matter is effected, so as that none can tear you asunder.

And how pleasant a thing is it to have such a God your own to glory in, and to walk in his name! to be able to say, "God, even my God, shall bless me! I need no other." How high matter of triumph was this to the Psalmist! Let it be told to the generations following, This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death, Psal. xlviii. 13, 14. As if he had said, We are willing that this should be known, in the present and succeeding ages. Let it be transmitted to posterity. Let there be a perpetual everlasting monument of this, that we have had the Lord for our God. Thus a certain noble person would have an inscription put upon his tomb, without any further enlargement, to this effect, That he had been a servant to Queen Elizabeth, counsellor to King James, and friend to Sir Philip Sidney. By this it appears that he would have all ages know whose servant, counsellor, and friend he had been.[a] In like manner should every good and pious soul declare to the present, and all future ages, that THE LORD IS HIS GOD.

7. Let your souls be filled with this apprehension, that God is always and every where present. How sweetly moving are those thoughts of God's omnipresence in the 139th Psalm! They were so to the Psalmist, and they are so to all the saints. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee," Ps. cxxxix. 7—18. And when the royal Psalmist considered, how God insinuated himself into every bone of his flesh, and particle of his frame, saying, "Thou hast possessed my reins, thou hast covered me in my mother's womb;" he breaks out at last into these words, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"

Let us then but habituate ourselves to the apprehension of an every where present Deity, conceiving all things filled with the Divine fulness, and this will supply the defect, or the want of seeing God. Let every creature, every place, every providence, put us in mind of God. Thus begins and ends the eighth Psalm, the design of which is, to contemplate God in these things, regarding them all as the works of his hands; "How excellent is thy name, O God, in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens!" Psal. viii. 1, 9. And what an ecstasy do we find Moses in, while he is celebrating a particular providence! "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. xv. 11. If then we did but labour to make this thought familiar to ourselves, that whithersoever we go, or wherever we are, we have a God to behold; that there are footsteps of God, every where, for us to take notice of, or impressions and prints of his glory; this would habituate us to his converse, and make the motions and exercises of love easy and familiar to us. This effect it had on the Psalmist in the 104th Psalm, who after a glorious descrip-

a The noble personage here alluded to, is Fulke Grevill, Lord Brooke; whose funeral monument is yet remaining in St. Mary's church in Warwick, and has on it this inscription:

FVLKE GREVILL
SERVANT TO QVEENE ELIZABETH
CONCELLER TO KING IAMES
AND FREND TO SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

tion of God, thus closeth it up; "My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord," Psal. civ. 34. He had been viewing God, as he was to be seen in the works of his hands; and his spirit was now drenched deeply in the thoughts of God's active power and providence, every where diffused in the world.

We, in like manner, should always have such thoughts injected into us, if we would but consider with ourselves, that wherever we are, still we live, and move, and have our being in God. The whole earth is full of his glory. By him all things consist. We can set a foot no where, but still we tread upon his ground, and are in his dominion. We cannot live, but by a vital influence derived from him. How much would this contribute to the facilitating the exercises of love! By converse love insinuates itself into persons, they are captivated before they are aware. And there is no man of so morose, sour, churlish a nature, but will have a sort of kindness for such, whom he converseth frequently with. Assiduous converse wins hearts. How much more, when we have such an amiable object, should we associate with him! It will then ensue of course, that we shall be taken with him, and drawn by the cords of love into the happy bonds.

8. And lastly, let us pray much and earnestly for the Spirit of life and love, which is his own gift. Among the many excellent fruits of the Spirit you see love leads the van, Gal. v. 22. It is of considerable moment to state the case to ourselves thus; "The love of God is one of the fruits of his own Spirit." How intent then should we be upon this, that he who claims to be the Object of our love, is pleased to be the Author of it! even of that pure, refined love, that is fit to be set upon so glorious an Object. Whereas such a carnalized, impure, drossy love as ours, can never turn itself unto God; will always decline, and shun that blessed Object. He must form our love for himself, or it will never do.

As he therefore makes our love the sum of his law, and of all his precepts, so we should make it the sum of all our requests. For it is at once indeed both our privilege and our duty. Both what we are to do, and what we are to enjoy, are all summed up in love. And if we make this the sum of our desires, how much of ingenuity would there be in this prayer, when we come to the Lord, and say, "Lord, if I should cast all my desires into one request, it is *love!* Love is the only thing. I beg only a heart to love thee." How much ingenuity is there, I say, in such a prayer! and how great also is the necessity of it! For we can as soon pluck down a star, or create a new sun, as plant in our own souls this principle of love to God, without his aid. Every good and perfect gift is from him; and certainly this is good, and a matter of high excellency, to have the heart possessed with his love. We can never understand the love of God to us, till our souls are, as it were, trans-elemented into a love to him. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him, 1 John iv. 16.

And now, after all this, would we be excused from the duty of loving God? that is, from being happy, from living a life of pleasure, from solacing ourselves with the immense Good? We should, methinks, as little wish to be excused, as a poor indigent man from having all his wants supplied; or a sick languishing person, from returning to health and strength; or a hungry fainting person, from receiving convenient food; or a weary person, from receiving refreshing ease and rest. Would we be excused from having God for our portion, our health and strength, our rest and all in all? We cannot indeed see God; but will that excuse us, when so many things present us with an idea and image of him? or when we have the privilege of addressing ourselves to him by prayer? The Scriptures do not speak to us in this matter with any intention or design to excuse us from this duty. There it is intimated, that all the good, which concerns a man's present state, comes from love to God. All, says the apostle, shall work together for good, to them that love God, Rom. viii. 28. And with respect to the other world, it is said that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath laid up for them that love him, 1 Cor. ii. 9.

And if we would but consider the matter, it is plain we cannot excuse our conduct to ourselves; much less to God. For do not our consciences tell us, that nothing is so easy, nothing so ready? And it is likewise to be considered, what will be made of this one day. I make little doubt but one very great part of the torture of hell, will lie in a too late repentance; that we never loved what our convicted consciences must needs have told us was most congruous, and fit to be loved. When an awakened soul shall make reflection, and consider, what infinite reason there was for the loving of God, and yet it could never be brought to it; we can conceive no sort of mental torture to be more tormenting than this. So that they, who live destitute of the love of God, and content themselves with so doing, are busily preparing their own hell all their days. Oh, how tormenting will be the reflection! "I lived a life's time in the world, and knew how reasonable a thing it was, how just and righteous to love God, and yet I never did love him!" This will be a most amazing subject for thoughts to feed upon, and to find torment by, throughout an eternal state. And therefore we are the more concerned to be restless in our spirits, till we feel the fire so to burn within us, and can make our appeal to God, saying, Thou knowest all things. Lord! thou knowest that I love thee, John xxi. 17

SERMON XI.*

We have endeavoured from these words to evince to you the indispensable obligation there is upon us to the continued exercise of love to God, notwithstanding that we cannot see him. This hath been doctrinally discoursed of, and also insisted upon by way of use, and particular application of that doctrine; but before we pass from it, it will be requisite to add somewhat further of a casuistical import.

It is very plain, that though there are not many sincere lovers of God in this world, yet there are few who pretend not to be so. They are apt to please themselves with the conceit that they love God, and so take the matter for granted, though there be nothing of any such affection in their hearts at all. Others there are, who are apt to suspect that they do not love him in sincerity, and are too forward to conclude, that they have none of this Divine affection, because they do not perceive it to work towards God, as their love does towards other objects. Finally, there are others again, who are very prone to censure those that speak of more passionate workings of affection to God, as mere hypocrites for this pretension. For since they experience nothing of such workings on their own hearts, they think it impossible there should be any such thing at all in the world. There are therefore three sorts of persons that our present discourse must have reference unto.

I. Such ignorant and careless souls as do, at random and without ever considering the matter, pronounce concerning themselves, that they are lovers of God; though if the matter be strictly looked into, they have no such thing as a motion of love in their heart to God at all.

II. Those that are prone to suspect, and conclude themselves to have no love to God at all, because they do not find this affection to work with that fervour and constancy that they think it should, and which they perceive on other occasions.

III. Such as are very apt to suspect, and accuse others of hypocrisy or folly, who seem to express the most passionate and fervent love to God, and think that such an affection towards him cannot have place in a human breast. What therefore is pretended to be of a spiritual and holy kind, must be resolved, they imagine, wholly into enthusiasm; or be attributed to the power of fancy, or imagination; or to the temper and disposition of the bodily humours, and the various structure and fabric even of the inferior parts of the body itself. To each of these sorts, reference must be had in what is now to be discoursed upon at this time.

* Preached November 1st, 1676.

I. As to those who confidently give out themselves to be lovers of God, though they never felt any motion of love to him at all in their hearts, such things as these it would be very fit for them to consider.

1. That it is a very rash and unreasonable, as well as dangerous, presumption, for them to conclude there is that in them which they have never perceived at all. For what might not one imagine or fancy upon such a pretence? Supposing it possible, must I believe every thing to be true which is barely possible to be true? How many absurd things should I then believe! For there are many things that possibly may be, which yet it would be a very great absurdity to believe are in reality. It is a known rule, that of things that appear not, nor exist, the same esteem is to be had. If then it no way appears, or however appears not to me, that I am a lover of God; with what confidence can I pretend to it, or say that I am so?

2. It is to be considered that it is a most natural thing to men to be very indulgent to themselves, and to think that of themselves, which none would think or imagine but themselves. It is natural to every wicked man to "flatter himself in his own eyes, until his wickedness be found out to be hateful," Ps. xxxvi. 2. Thus says the Psalmist, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart," that is, suggests to me, "that there is no fear of God before his eyes," Ps. xxxvi. 1. And truly this does as effectually speak or declare, that he hath not the love of God in him; yet at the same time he flatters himself, as it there follows, in his own eyes, till the matter comes to be plainly observable to every eye. Hence it may be very well understood, how it comes to pass that men are so apt to judge themselves any thing, which it would be horrid for them not to be thought to be, only from the kindness they have to themselves. For how horrid is it for any man to admit himself to be no lover of God! Therefore he must needs think himself such, or affirm that as true, which it were a horrid thing to confess and avow to be false. And so, upon the matter, their love to God depends upon, and runs into nothing else, but a partial and fond love to themselves.

3. They should consider how obvious the mistake is, to take a conviction of conscience in this case for an affection of the heart. That is, because they are convinced that it is a very reasonable and fit thing to love God, therefore they conclude, that they do love him. But how most irrational is the conclusion! They may as well conclude their approbation of any thing else, to be the possession of the thing itself. For instance, that they are rich, because they approve of riches; or that they are in very good health, because they approve of a sound habit of body. It is plain that this is all which the most can say, as to the bottom of their pretence. They have nothing at all in them like the love of God, but only this conviction of conscience, that it is fit he should be loved. Of this there is a necessary and unavoidable approbation imposed upon their judgment, from the evidence of the thing itself. And as all men are convinced, that the obligation is indispensable, therefore they are willing to take it for granted, that they have the love of God in them.

4. It follows, as another thing to be considered, that if the love of God in itself be really a distinct thing, and different from such a conviction, then their love to him is reduced to nothing; for it is really nothing, distinguished from such a conviction, or apprehension in their own minds. And under a notion of its being an affection of a finer kind and nature than to be obvious to common observation, they have refined it quite away, even into a mere nothing. For doth not every man's own sense tell him, that the love of this or that thing is quite another thing than a mental approbation of it? Or may not I be convinced in my judgment of the excellencies of one, to whom I have yet a settled aversion in my heart? How many cannot endure such persons, of whom upon conviction they cannot say they are not excellent men? And certainly it will put every sober considerer of this state of the case upon quite new thoughts, when he shall find he is not able to tell what the thing is, that he calls love to God, if it must be distinguished from the mere conviction of the reasonableness of it.

5. It is also to be considered, that since love to God, if it be any where, is to be discerned and felt, and must be a ruling principle; it is then a most absurd imagination, that such a principle should be in men, of which they have no perception. For is it not absurd, that a principle, which is to have the conduct of a man's life, and so very great power in and over him in his whole course, should yet be neither discernible, nor felt? Indeed there are many thoughts and motions that stir in our minds, of which we take very little notice; nor can we in a little time say positively, whether we have such a thought or no. But that a principle, which runs through the universal course of a man's life, and which of all things should most frequently come under his notice, should yet be neither felt nor perceived by him, is the most unimaginable of all things we can conceive of. Therefore those who have so hastily pronounced themselves to be lovers of God, and yet never felt any thing by which this love is to be discerned, are besought to think again, to allow the cause a rehearing, to take it into new consideration, and not run away with a groundless conceit that they are what it so much concerns them actually to be, while they are only so in their own fancies and imaginations.

II. I now come to the next sort, namely, those who are apt to judge themselves wholly destitute of sincere love to God, because they do not find those passionate motions of it towards him, as they do towards many inferior objects. And there are sundry considerations, which will be very requisite to be weighed in this case too. As,

1. That certainly the actual exercise of love towards God may be often intermitted, when an habitual propension of heart towards him doth remain. The soul may frequently be put beside the direct acts and exercise of this duty; and yet that virtue and principle, which hath touched their hearts, and by gracious vouchsafement is seated there, may still habitually incline them the same way. As the needle touched with the load-stone, is frequently diverted from its direct tendency towards the north; for being moved it shakes and quavers, and hath its various vibrations this way and that, yet there is a virtue in it that will bring and reduce it to the right point again. Therefore it is not this or that act of love towards God, that gives the denomination; but the habitual propension, and bent of the heart. A man then is to be esteemed a lover of God, according as his heart stands habitually propense to him. But if the denomination depend upon this or the other act; then a man would cease to be a lover of God, as often as he loveth or thinketh of any one else, or is diverted from it by this or that though never so necessary an occasion. And again,

2. It is very necessary, that we consider the act and the passion of love as very distinguishable, or different things. The act of love in a reasonable intelligent creature, is nothing else but the complacential motion of the will towards this or that object, that is apprehended amiable, or worthy to be loved. The passion of love is the impression made by an object, upon the animal and vital spirits of the brain and heart, which, being sensible, are reflected upon, and by many are taken notice of (through a great mistake) as if the very notion and being of love was placed there. Whereas the whole entire nature of Divine love is separable from that passion, and may be without it; otherwise if passion were of the essence of love, it were altogether impossible, that the separate soul should be capable of loving God, or any thing else. This is a mere accident to our love, and a result that depends upon our present union with the body; which body is essentially necessary, neither to our soul, nor to our love, for both may be without it. And I add,

3. That those acts which are performed, as I may call it, in the upper region of the soul, and which are more peculiar to its intellectual nature, are as truly discernible, as the passions are which rebound upon, and affect the body. The acts of the mind, and of the will, are no more imperceptible than the passions; and it is as possible for me to be able to discern and feel the former, as the latter. Cannot I as well tell that I think such a thought, if I do think it; that I intend and purpose such a thing, if I do really entertain in my heart such a resolution; as that I feel the motions that affect my outward man? If therefore a person with a practical judgment esteems the blessed

God to be his highest and best good, and accordingly chooses him as such, and settles this resolution in his own soul, saying, "This God shall be my God, my best and supreme Good, here will I seek my felicity, and take up my rest, and to him will I be an entirely devoted one for ever;" in this person certainly lies the substance and essence of love. And is not this perceptible? are not such acts as these capable of being reflected on, and taken notice of, if men would but more frequently turn their eyes inward, and habituate themselves to converse with themselves. But I further add,

4. That most certain it is, that during our abode in the body, the affections of the soul have more intimately an influence upon it. Such is the close and mysterious union between these two natures of flesh and spirit; that the influences between the one and the other are reciprocal. And therefore it is that the very temper or complexion of our souls doth so naturally, some way or other, represent itself in the outward man, as that it is very difficult, almost impossible, to hide and conceal what are the sentiments of our spirits upon certain occasions. Whence it hath grown into a maxim, *Vultus est index animi. That the face is the character of the mind. Heu, quam difficile est crimen non prodere vultu! How hard is it for a man not to betray guilt in his countenance, if he has the sense of it in his own mind and heart!* And therefore we should consider with ourselves, how our affections work towards God; even according to the usual way, wherein human affections are wont to show and discover themselves. For I add,

5. That even spiritual, holy affections, such as respect the invisible God, and other invisible objects, do frequently so work in those pious souls in whom they are, as to make very great and deep impressions upon the body, and are accompanied with such passionate expressions, as are discernible, even to the inferior senses which belong to the animal nature. Let passages of Scripture to this purpose be looked into. How was the Psalmist affected and wrought upon by one affection towards God, when he tells us, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," Ps. cxix. 120. There is a proportion between fear and love, in this case. As for love, the same devout Psalmist says, "My soul thirsteth for thee, O God! yea, my flesh longeth for thee," Ps. lxiii. 1. And again, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God," Ps. lxxxiv. 2. Now these are not to be understood as mere rhetorical strains; for indeed they are not so, but do plainly carry this signification with them, that though the flesh be more immediately incapable of desire, of thirsting, and longing after God, whereof the soul alone is primarily capable, yet, mediately, the flesh partakes thereof. That is, the heart and soul did so much long after God, that the flesh was affected and bore the impression of that vehement desire, which was in the soul, as in its original and proper seat. We are therefore to consider, that even the more passionate workings of love towards God are very agreeable to that kind of affection, which in respect to the object, and principle of it, is spiritual and divine. And therefore,

6. It must further be added, that if persons be very apt to be passionately affected in other kinds, and towards other objects, but do always find themselves dull and insensible of such motions towards God and invisible things, they have a great deal of reason to suspect themselves to be under a very bad distemper. Indeed, when persons are equally, and alike, unapt to feel such passionate resentments in their hearts towards any kind of objects, the matter is quite otherwise. But if they can ordinarily say, "I feel my love to work towards the creature, a relation, or other amiable objects, in this and that passionate manner, but I can feel no love working towards God," they are far from being in a good condition. They have, at least, a good deal of reason to suspect, that a distemper prevails upon them. Their love languisheth, and needs re-enforcement; and they ought not to content themselves to have the matter so, as if it were a case to be approved of, and that needed no redress. But yet again,

7. We must consider, that tempers are very carefully to be distinguished. The temper of some men's minds is more composed, according as the bodily temper is more fixed, and their natural spirits are less volatile. Hence some are of a more even deportment to every object, even to the observation of others, and seldom are seen to be exalted, or depressed, whatever occurrences happen to them in the course of their lives. They are not often seen, it may be, either to weep or laugh, to be either remarkably sad or cheerful. And grace, or this holy affection, wherever it is in its subject, is somewhat conform to the natural temper of the person; as water poured into a vessel resembleth the form of that vessel. If the vessel be round, then it resembles a round figure; if triangular, then it resembles a triangular figure. So I say, grace and holy affections, where they are, resemble their subject, and receive in some sense a likeness and conformity to it, so as not to change the natural temper of the mind. Indeed the great business of the grace of God is to influence men as to morals, and not as to naturals. Therefore it were an unreasonable thing for any one to make himself a measure to all other persons, how much soever they differ in temper from him. Or that any one should make another such a standard to himself, that however it be with him as to his natural temper, he must be just such as others are; which is equally to aim at a thing both unnecessary and impossible. Further,

8. We must warily distinguish between the exercise of love upon extraordinary and sudden occasions, and such as are common and less surprising. As you know one may converse daily among the nearest relatives, and never feel any discernible pang of affection working towards them, as one does to an object that suddenly appears. This proceeds from frequency and familiarity with them; when possibly the very same person would be in a transport upon the sudden and unexpected sight of the face of a friend, whom he had not seen for many years before. Now this is not inconsiderable as to our present case. It may be thus with many persons, who do not feel such a passionate pang of love towards persons they daily converse with, as they do towards others, at the sight of whom they are surprised; yet, notwithstanding this, their love may be far dearer, and habitually much more strong, to those relations whom they daily converse with, as occasions when administered abundantly show; that is, they would do more for them, and be more deeply concerned if they saw them in distress, pain, and anguish. They would with much more regret endure separation from them, or take their deaths much more impatiently; which things show their affections to be habitually much stronger, though, upon sudden occasions, or in a certain juncture, they may work much more observably. And thus it may possibly be with some persons, who walk more evenly in their spirits before God. They have, it may be, fewer transports than others, who are of such uneven spirits, that the sight of God is often a new thing to them. They have him less frequently out of sight, and are daily more conversant with him, and therefore are not subject to such violent emotions of mind. And if we compare these together, certainly we can never think, that there is a greater excellency in that temper which subjects a man, now and then, to higher transports of spiritual and divine affection, than in that temper of spirit, which is more steadily determined to a continual course of walking with God, in whom there is also an habitual complacence.

Lastly, This is further to be considered, that if at any time one would try the sincerity of one's heart towards God, it is much more clearly to be evinced by the influence this hath on a man's life, than by the passionate or sensible impressions made upon the body. I say, we have a far surer evidence of our love to God, from the influence it has to govern and manage the course of our lives, than from all the passionate emotions and resentments we may feel in the inferior parts of the outward man. Suppose such raptures, and transports, and ecstatical motions, as are very strange, and not without their delectation and pleasure; alas! these signify but little towards the evincing of true sincere love to God, in comparison of a stable course of living under his government, as persons who are beyond all things loath to offend and displease him. If you seek an evidence of the truth of your love to God, take this; "If ye love me, keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. And again, "This is the love of God, that we may keep his commandments," 1 John v.

3. Though we must take heed here of thinking, as was formerly said, that the external effect is sufficient without the principle; or that a course of obedience, in outward acts, to the rules set before us, will do the business, though there be nothing of the principle of the love of God in us. But take these in connexion, the principle with the effect, and they are a great deal more pungent demonstrations of love, than mere transports of extraordinary affection, now and then, are. Agreeably to which our Lord says, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him," John xiv. 21. And again, as it afterwards follows, "If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," ver. 23.

So that we should take heed of putting too much upon the mere matter of passionate love in this case; unless, as we said before, it be manifestly discernible, that we can be passionately affected to any other kind of objects, while we find a stupidity and dulness upon us, with respect to those which are spiritual and divine. Therefore lay the great stress always here; "What doth the love I pretend to signify as to the conduct of my life? Do I live as a lover of God? as if it were an ungrateful matter to me, above all things, to displease him? as that I study, by all means possible, to maintain an intercourse of union and communion between him and me? Is it such a love as makes his honour dear to me, so that I am above all things concerned not to disgrace the name which I bear, or be a reproach to him to whom I profess a relation? Is there such a principle in me as makes distance from God a wearisome thing? And would I fain be nearer to him daily, more acquainted with him, more conformed to him, and changed into his divine image and likeness?" If this is the influence that love to God hath upon our lives, it is the evidence, it is the thing, if any thing can be so, that must prove and demonstrate to ourselves the sincerity of our love.

SERMON XII.*

WE have already in the preceding discourse offered sundry considerations to those, who are apt to take it for granted that they are lovers of God, though they never really discerned any motion of love to him in their hearts at all; or who fondly imagine that the conviction of their judgment in this matter, is to be taken for the affection of the heart. We have also spoken in several particulars to another sort, who suspect they are no true lovers of God, and are many times ready to conclude so; because their love to him is not so fervent and passionate as they think it ought to be. And now,

III. We come to the third sort that we have to do with, to wit, those who are apt to censure other persons, merely upon this account; because they make profession of such a fervent love to God, as they themselves are altogether strangers to. All expressions of such a fervent passionate love to God fall under a suspicious censure, and accusation from these men. As for instance, they charge all such expressions of love with hypocrisy, or with enthusiasm; thinking it proceeds from nothing else but a fantastic representation of the object they pretend to love; or else, they resolve it all into the temper of the body, and say it owes itself to nothing else but to such or such a crasis, a present habit and temperature, or a freer circulation of the blood, and quicker agitation of certain brisk and agile spirits. And thus they think that a mechanical account is to be given of all such kind of affections; and that whosoever well understands the structure of the brain, or the nature of the spleen and hypochondria, and the various twistings of the nerves about the veins and arteries, may very well be able to give a good account of all such kind of love.

1. Now as to the first of these, to wit, the charge of hypocrisy, we must allow (as there will be further occasion to evince hereafter when welcome to the last doctrine) that if any do pretend to such a love to God, and join with it an immoral conversation, there is a great deal of reason for the charge; and in such a case we must fall in with the accuser and say the same. But if this charge be fastened upon persons, whose walk and conversation is sober and just, we have then several things to say to it. As,

(1.) It is a most uncharitable censure to say that all pretence to a more fervent and vehement love to God, is for this very reason hypocritical. I wonder why so? Does not this seem to say, that there can be no such thing as a real and fervent love to God? This is surely a very strange accusation, at once without warrant, and against the express law of charity, which requires us to "think no evil," 1 Cor. xiii. 5. And it is an essential character of it to be absolutely disinclined to take up an evil surmise, or bad thoughts of any one, where there is not a very manifest and apparent cause.

(2.) The charge is most unreasonable. There is not the least ground for such a censure, supposing the persons to be in the main of a sober, just, and unexceptionable deportment among men. Of such it may most unrighteously be said, that they are hypocrites, while they pretend to love God. But how will you prove your charge? by what medium will you make it out, that all pretences of love to God, by such persons, are hypocritical? And surely that is a most unreasonable censure, for which no reason can be given.

(3.) Such a charge or accusation must needs proceed from a most idle and pragmatic temper. For these censurers show themselves to be vain busy-bodies, who meddle out of their own province. But what have they to do to judge the hearts of other men? That is a province they have nothing at all to do in. What is it then but a vain pragmatic humour that prompts them to meddle in a sphere wherein they have no concern? "Who art thou," saith the Scripture, "that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth," Rom. xiv. 4. Nay,

(4.) It is to be guilty of the most insolent presumption; for it is to encroach upon the prerogative of God, to whom alone it belongs to search and judge the heart. Who are they that take upon them to judge one another? "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," Rom. xiv. 10. Whoever they are that do judge so, they subject themselves to the judgment of God. Therefore says our Lord, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," Matt. vii. 1. That is, in effect, if you judge so at random, and where you have nothing to do, you shall know what judging means, when you shall be judged also.

(5.) I would further say, by way of question, Pray what is the thing you find fault with in this case? Is it this love itself, or is it the appearance of it? Sure it will not be said, it is the love itself. Who would be so impudently profane as to say, it is a crime to love God? or that such love is criminal, when it is warm and vehement? as if it were possible to love God too much. Sure this will never be said by those who consider that we are required to "love him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind," Matt. xxii. 37. And besides, this were to make the accusation to contradict itself; for whensoever the charge of hypocrisy is alleged against any one, the thing pretended to is implied to be good and commendable.

Or is it the appearance of such love that is found fault with? That is just the same thing as to find fault with the sun for shining. It is true, all discovery of this or any other excellency whatsoever ought to be modest, and sober; most remote from any thing of boasting or vain-glorious ostentation, than which, in such a case as this, nothing in all the world can be more fulsome. But what! should a man be ashamed to become, and appear, an earnest lover of God? Was the Psalmist shy of appearing so, when he again and again avowed it with so much solemnity? when he made professions of his love to God, which he designed, and no doubt knew would be recorded to all future times? And the noble personage whom we spoke of before, was he ashamed to have it recorded, that he was such a one's friend? It is so remarkable that we cannot look

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over a page in the book of Psalms, but we shall find some or other expression now made public to the world, of an avowed love of God. "I love the Lord," says he, "because he hath heard my voice and my supplications," Ps. cxvi. 1. And again, "I will love thee, O Lord my strength," xviii. 1. The word there used is most emphatically expressive of the most vehement, ardent, fervent love. "I will love thee from my very bowels." And what! is this a thing for a man to be ashamed of? to profess himself an earnest lover of God, if indeed he is so. He only has reason to be ashamed of saying he is so, who is not so in reality. But I say further,

(6.) That this same accusation is hypocritical. It carries the most palpable hypocrisy in it; for it is manifest that such persons do only pretend to be angry at the pretence of love to God; when it plainly appears they are angry that the love of God should really be in any one. And this is easy to be made out. For do not all men generally profess love to God? Now they are not angry at those that profess, but love him not. But what religion is there without love? and whoever professes religion, does consequently profess love to God. But let them make it appear by their practice, that their profession is but a mockery, that they do but say, "Hail!" and strike at the Divine Majesty at the same time; let them I say, with their pretence of religion, or love to God, but join some practical signification that they are not in good earnest, and they please well enough, no fault is found with them.

So that it is very plain the fault they are bent against is not hypocrisy, but sincerity. They are angry that there is any such thing as sincere love to God in the world. Therefore, as Plato said to the cynic, who trod upon a fine bed of his, and cried out, "I tread on Plato's pride," that he, the cynic, discovered greater pride by this action; so we may say to these men who accuse professors of love to God with hypocrisy, that it is with more hypocrisy. It is not the mere pretence of love to God, that they intend to accuse, as supposing it false, or that there is no such thing, but because they really suspect it is true. They think that such men have that in them, which they have not, and therefore they pass a kind of judgment upon them in their own consciences. This they cannot endure; and since they would fain malign them in their report, therefore they would do it as plausibly as they can, and are more witty than to say, they censure them for loving truly, but for pretending to it falsely. But then again,

2. The affection of this kind is by some charged with enthusiasm. "If (say they) there be any such affection, it is altogether enthusiastic. It owes itself entirely to the fantastical representation of the object, and so can have nothing sincere or genuine belonging to it." To this I say,

(1.) Why so? why must it needs be thought enthusiastical? What! because it is more than ordinarily vehement or fervent? as if no sober exercise or expression of love to God could be so. And we know too, though I lay very little stress upon it,

(2.) That the name of enthusiasm hath sometimes had a gentler sound than now it hath; since the Ἐμπνευσόι, and phrases signifying inspiration from God, are so frequently to be found in the writings of Plato, and others of the philosophers. And yet they were never twitted as enthusiasts, nor treated as if that name carried any thing of evil signification, or the import of a bad character in it. But,

(3.) Why should it be wondered at that there should be expressions of love to God which import great fervour and intenseness; since we know that such as have been professedly related and devoted to God heretofore, and of whom Scripture records give us an account, have been all along very full of such expressions? What would they think of such expressions as these of David? "I opened my mouth, and panted; for I longed for thy commandments," Ps. cxix. 131. "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times," ver. 20. "Oh how love I thy holy law!" ver. 97. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," xlii. 1. Yea, we find that there have been such appearances and expressions obvious to view, of this divine spiritual affection, that have incurred the censure of insanity; and yet they have been reckoned a glory. Thus it was with David, who when he was censured for dancing before the Lord, answers, "I will play before the Lord, I will yet be more vile," &c. 2 Sam. vi. 21, 22. And says the apostle, "Whether we be besides ourselves it is to God; or whether we be sober it is for your cause: for the love of Christ constraineth us," 2 Cor. v. 13, 14. It is very likely he speaks here with reference to the censure of those false teachers, with whom you find him conflicting in that very chapter; as very frequently he does in both the epistles to the Corinthians, and also in others. They perhaps went about to represent him as a wild enthusiast; as one that was acted by an enthusiastical fury. Therefore he speaks according to their sense. Admit it, be it so; if I be really besides myself, as they talk, it is the love of Christ which constrains me! He thinks himself not at all disparaged in the case. But I further say,

(4.) I make little doubt but many do attribute too much to rapture, and the ecstatic motions and transports of otherwise pious love. I refer therefore to what was said under a foregoing head, especially to that distinction which was given you of the act, and of the passion of love, which are not only distinguishable, but sometimes plainly separable things. There may be very intense love, very strong and mighty love, where there is nothing of passion felt. This is a thing altogether accidental to the nature of love, which may be diverse and distinct from passion; otherwise there would be no such thing as loving God at all in any other way. And we must further say,

(5.) That no doubt it is a very great fault to frame representations and ideas of God and of divine things in our minds, by the use of a liberty indulged to our own fancy and imagination, if therein we go beyond or besides the warrant of his own revelation. And even there too we must be very careful, when we find God representing himself, or other matters of a divine and spiritual nature, under borrowed expressions or similitudes, that we mind the thing that is to be represented, and held forth to us, and that we drain and defecate it from all the dregs of materiality, which belong to the metaphor; otherwise we may be greatly injurious, more than we are aware of, both to the Divine honour, and to ourselves.

Too many do greatly gratify the luxury of their fancies in such cases. We read of one, but very likely there may be more instances than one, I say we read of one, a popish female saint, who pretended in vision to such a communion with our Saviour, that forsooth she took upon her to describe him; what sort of eyes he had, and what kind of features; and pretended to be most passionately enamoured of him. And perhaps there are too many over-prone to frame imaginations concerning the Deity, altogether unworthy of and disagreeable to that glorious and ever-blessed Being; and having thereupon formed such and such ideas of him in their own minds, are variously affected according to the import of the idea about him. For instance, those of very melancholy tempers are apt to frame ideas altogether unlike God, and such as render him in their eyes a dreadful and hateful object. Or if the idea be such as imports loveliness; yet if it be fantastical, and an affection of love be raised thereupon, it is most plain and evident that such a person is all the while but hugging his own shadow, and entertaining himself with an empty cloud, or an idol of his own forming. And I do not know wherein he is less guilty, than in falling down before an image. When we do in our own fancies create a God to ourselves, and an extraordinary motion of affection is working towards it, one kind or another, it is our own creature that we are all this while entertaining ourselves with, and not God. Therefore we ought to take heed that our apprehensions of things be scriptural and regular; such as that light which shines in God's word, or that clear flame which reason, when it argues according to the word of God, doth give us. Otherwise we are mere idolaters, while we imagine that we have only complacency in doing homage to God. But I add,

Lastly, That the most regular, true, and rational apprehensions of God, do give ground for the most fervent and vehement love of him that is possible, And therefore it is a very foolish, idle thing, to charge love to God with being enthusiastical merely because it is fervent. For though it be such as answers truly, it can never answer fully such apprehensions of the object, as are agreeable to God, and

such as God's own revelation gives ground and warrant for. Certainly there is no warrant to say that there is any thing of enthusiasm in such a pretence as this. There is no need that any such exorbitant digressions and excursions should be made to by-ways of representing God to ourselves, that so he may be amiable and lovely in our eyes. A true and right apprehension of him, that is most agreeable to the Object itself, and his revelation, as the best and truest ground of the strongest and most vehement ove. And certainly to a sober Christian, a fantastical representation of a divine object will rather greatly cool and check his love, than contribute to the heat of it. But,

3. Such an affection, as we are speaking of, is by others resolved into the temper and disposition of the bodily humours; or the various structure of our frame, and the freer motion of the blood and animal spirits. And to this also it is,

(1.) To be acknowledged that there is undoubtedly very much truth in the matter, so far as that the affection may be more intense, and exercised with a more sensible vigour, according as the body is so and so disposed, or as the habit of it is at that time.

(2.) Do not we also know that there are pious men of all tempers and constitutions of body? and is not every man the more pious, by how much the more he is a lover of God? And,

(3.) Admit that bodily tempers signify any thing in this matter, that is, in the present exercise of the affections in general, what is to be inferred? Will it follow, that such an affection as this, in which the blood and spirits may be so and so concerned, hath therefore nothing spiritual and divine in it? which way should that follow? Why is it not as apprehensible that divine and spiritual love may run in the same natural channel, and follow the same common course of operations, with other love, as that wine and water may alternately flow through the same conduit pipes? Or why should it be more unreasonable and absurd, that divine and spiritual love should exert itself by the same corporeal organs with love of another kind, as having the same seat and subject, the faculties of the soul? I hope it is not one faculty in the soul that common love hath its seat in, and another faculty that divine love hath its seat in. Why should it be necessary there should be other internal organs for divine than for common love, more than external ones? Why may not divine love run the same course with common love in the respect that hath been mentioned? And why may that not be promoted, in its bent and exertions, by a brisk and quick agitation of the vital and animal spirits? What great inconvenience is there in this? Or what greater necessity is there for it to be otherwise, than there is for a man to have one pair of hands to do his common business, and another to lift up to God in prayer? May not a man speak of God or of divine things, and of other matters, with the same tongue? and may not the same eyes which serve to read the Bible, serve to read any other book? But this carries more of folly and foolery at the bottom, than to deserve more words to be said about it.

Therefore to wind up all, Will we severally resolve, upon all that hath been at so many times discoursed to you upon this subject, namely, the love of an unseen God, are we I say resolved to apply ourselves in good earnest to the exercise and practice of it? It is a very dismal thing, if all our hearing at such times and occasions as these are, must be for nothing else, but only to give the ear a present pleasure. Or that we must take such an opportunity as this to meet together, only to see one another's faces, without ever minding to lay up a stock, and to add to a treasure, of that light and grace, that may actually influence our future course. Certainly we should be most inexcusable persons, if after all this we should make as little conscience of the actual frequent exercise of love to God as heretofore. If any that have heard so much of this matter, shall go hereafter from day to day, and have reason to say, "This day I have not loved God at all, I do not know there has ever been a pleasant thought of him," and so indulge themselves in the liberty of running on in this course, it will not admit of being said all this hath been to no purpose. For it will certainly be found to have been to some purpose, but to a sad and dismal one, when the day comes that every one must be judged according to the light they had. And the word that hath been spoken to those that live under the Gospel is that by which they must be judged.

Let us bethink ourselves, What is our life, if love run not through it? if a vein of love to God be not carried through the course of it? Alas, without this, life is but a dream, and all our religion but a fancy! What do such assemblies as these signify? What a cold, pitiful business is it, for so many of us to come together, if no love to God stir among us! We pretend to come to a God, whom we do not love. What a pitiful account can we give of our coming together, if this be all! The show and shadow of a duty! a holy flourish! and that is all. This, I say, is all, if the love of God do not animate our worship.

We cannot pretend to doubt whether God ought to be loved or no. It is a plain indisputable case. There are a great many things in religion, that are matter of doubt and disputation, and many things are made so more than need. And truly I take this occasion to say, it is no wonder there is so little love of God, and of true, living religion; because there is so much unnecessary disputing about the formalities of religion. It is a very sad and dreadful contemplation to think of, that so many persons can make the matters of religion a topic barely to please themselves with. If they can but toss an argument, cavil, and contend about this or that matter, then they are enamoured with and highly applaud themselves, as if they could do some great thing in the business of religion; but all this while, and even by these very means, the love of God and all practical religion vanishes. These things have exhausted and wasted the strength, spirits, and vigour of religion itself, and made it look so languidly, and become so pitiful a thing as it is grown to be in our days; so that professors are now but the spectres and umbræ of Christians, mere skeletons. They are so in comparison of what Christians were in former days, when every one might discern that in their behaviour, which might justly make them cry out, Aye! these are heavenly persons indeed! Heaven was seen in their converse, and all savoured of love to God. The Lord knoweth to what degree our religion is degenerated, and what it is like to come to at last!

And let us consider with ourselves, that we fill up our days with calamities, and make our souls desolate and forlorn; we involve ourselves in all manner of miseries by estranging ourselves from God, and not living in the actual exercise of love to him.

Moreover, let us consider that we are not always to live in this world. A dying hour doth expect us. We are hovering upon the brink of the grave. And what! is it a good preparation for death to live strangers to God, as long as we live in this world? Oh! with what horror must that thought strike a man in a dying hour, when his own heart shall tell him, "Thou hast not lived in the love of God!" Dare we, can we think, have we, I say, the confidence to think of going to God at length! to one that we have never loved, and to whom we have lived strangers all our days. But, oh blessed preparation for death! when a man shall be able, under the expectation of expiring his last breath, to reflect and say, that his life hath been a continual walk with God. How easy a death must that man die! Death conveys him to no stranger, to no unknown presence; to die, in regard to him, is but to know that Being better whom he knew before; and to love him better whom he loved before; and to have those enjoyments improved in degree, with the nature and kind of which he had a former acquaintance.

Let us then be serious, and in good earnest in this business; and know, we can never do any thing to purpose in it if we labour not to have our spirits more entirely abstracted from the world. Alas! do we think we can serve two masters, God and the world? If we love the one we shall despise the other; for, as our Lord tells us, Matt. vi. 24. we cannot love both. How often should these monitory, these weighty and wounding, words be thought of, by them whom they more especially concern? "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. Therefore saith the apostle, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." And is not this a cutting word of our Saviour's to the Jews, "I

know you, that you have not the love of God in you?"[a] And would we be branded for such? We had need then to watch the more strictly over ourselves, when we have to do with the affairs of this world, that our spirits be not ruffled, nor suffer a discomposure by the amusements of sensible things, or the variety of occurrences and affairs that we meet with in this our earthly pilgrimage.

Constant watchfulness, and much dependance upon God, and having him still before our eyes, would be a great help to us in this matter. It might make you wonder to hear, what some have professed to have attained unto, who were not of your religion. For instance, we are told of a nobleman of a foreign country, a Romanist, who professed to have had such times, that when he passed along the streets of Paris, where continual diversions might easily have disturbed him, and could scarce be imagined to do otherwise, his soul was so taken up with God as to be no more moved, than if he had been in a desert. And Seneca himself, a pagan, writing a letter to his friend, says to this purpose; for I remember not the very words, nor have lately seen the book: "You write to me to give you an account how I passed yesterday. Truly you have a very good opinion of me, to think I so pass a day as to be able to give you an account of what took it up. But since you desire it, I will tell you. My window opens to the theatre, where are all the shows, and the noise and clamours that you well know the theatrical sports carry with them. Why (saith he) all these things (so much have I been taken up with divine matters) have no more moved me, than the whistling of the wind among the leaves of the trees in a wood," &c.

These things that I mention should be upbraiding to us, that we so little mind our spirits, and inward man, with the operative motions and reflections thereof, and never look after a composed spirit, that is employed in minding God, and taken up with the exercise of his love, through the worldly affairs and occurrences we meet with here. If we would do any thing to purpose in the exercise of love to God; if we would not be as those, that busy themselves about trifles; like the pharisaical hypocrites whom our Saviour speaks of, who were so zealous in tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, that in the mean while they forgot judgment, and mercy, and the love of God; I say, if we would not be like them, but would do any thing to purpose, there must be times set apart for us to quit the world, with the torturing and distracting thoughts thereof; and let us labour to do it so totally, as to forget that there is any thing in it but God, and misery.

SERMON XIII.*

We have largely insisted upon a twofold truth from these words, and told you,

First, That there is a greater difficulty of living in the exercise of love to God than towards man, upon this account, that he is not the object of sight as man is. And,

Secondly, That our obligation to the love of God is most indispensable, notwithstanding that we see him not; or, that the impossibility of seeing God, is no excuse for our not loving him. There is yet another point which remains to be considered, and which was at first proposed with the former; and that is,

Thirdly, That they do most falsely and absurdly pretend to the love of an unseen God, who love not their brother whom they do see. This point is full and direct in the eye of the text.

It is manifest the apostle speaks here upon the notice he had taken, that there were some persons of very high pretensions to religion, and the love of God, who were yet manifestly and notoriously defective in the exercise and expression of love towards men, and even towards their fellow-Christians. And he counts it therefore necessary to cast a slur upon that empty kind of profession, and to give a dash unto that specious fancy and gilded nothing of a pretence to the love of God, disjoined or severed from that other branch of love, namely, that towards men. In speaking to this it will be requisite to do these three things, in order to the rendering this truth more capable of belief.

I. To show in what extent, or with what limitations, we are to understand this form of speech here in the text, the loving our brother.

II. To show whence it comes to pass, that any should take upon them to pretend love to God, who yet have no love to their brother. And,

III. To show the absurdity and falsehood of that pretence. Upon which the use will ensue.

I. It will be needful to consider a little in what extent, or with what limitation, this form of speech is to be understood, namely, the love of our brother; that is, how we are to understand the expression, our brother; and what is meant by love, as it refers to him in this and other such like passages.

I conceive we may very warrantably extend the meaning of this expression, as was formerly hinted to you in the first opening of the words, to such a latitude as to understand by it the duties of the second table; as love to God includes all the duties of the first. So our Saviour hath taught us to understand both these, in the answer which he gave to that querist, who asked him which was the great commandment of the law. The answer was this; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. xxii. 37—40. And the apostle you know also tells us, that "Love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 10. All is summed up in this one word, love.

And the same apostle in the very epistle from whence my text is taken, in insisting so much upon love to our brethren, as he doth throughout this epistle, guides us to his own drift and scope; and particularly when he tells us, that "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments," 1 John v. 3. It is manifest, that sometimes in this epistle he intends by this expression, the love of God, not merely that love which terminates upon him as the object of it, but that love which is from God, as the author of it, divine love. And he speaks of this divine love indefinitely, and says it is the keeping of God's commandments; and of these commandments too we are to understand him speaking universally, and intimating that to love God is to keep all his commandments. It is love which runs forth in obedience to all his laws, which you know are divided into these two tables; the one is a comprehension of the precepts touching such things as relate to himself; the other of those which concern man. Therefore I doubt not but the word, brother, here in the text, may be taken in the same latitude, that neighbor is taken in, when it expresseth and signifieth to us the duties of a Christian to his neighbour, as in that place before mentioned, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," that is, any man. So that the duties that we owe to men, as men, are all to be collected and gathered up in this, as the great summary, namely, love to our brother.

It is very true indeed, brother is a title that many times in Scripture doth distinctly, and with some limitation, hold forth to us a community and fraternity in religion; a brotherhood, who are in a state of subjection and devotedness to God, and are really his servants and children, as we shall have occasion further to speak by and by. But it is plain also, that it is sometimes used in Scripture in a far more extensive sense; as Adam in a more extensive sense is said to be the son of God. You find it was part of the accusation against Job, (injurious enough no doubt, but that is nothing to our purpose,) that he did take away the pledge from his brother, and made the poor naked, and sent them away unclothed, Job xxii. 6. And so you know Paul bespeaks all that great assembly before whom

[a] John v. 42. See a moving discourse on these words by the Author in this volume, entitled, A Sermon directing what we are to do, after a strict inquiry, whether or no we truly love God? It is only one single discourse out of seven or eight upon the same subject; and seems to have been published without his full consent, on account of the great impressions it had made upon the audience.

* Preached November 15th, 1679.

he was convened, and with whom he was disputing, after this manner, "Men and brethren," Acts xxiii. 1. Though they were far from being all Christians as he was.

And I wish that there were not too much need to insist upon this business of love to our brother according to this latitude; that those were not many in our days, who make a very great show of piety towards God, and hold forth an appearance of religion even in a more eminent degree; and yet indulge in themselves a very great liberty (most injuriously assumed, God knows) as to their dispositions and deportment towards men as men, with whom they are cast into human society. Yea, and there hath been a way found out to make little of all matters of this nature; a way to depreciate and speak diminishingly of whatever is of that import, by affixing characters upon persons which it is intended should lessen them; as such a one is a good moral man, and the like. Truly, if it were only to assign to each man his proper place, or to determine that to be of less value and account which really is so, this were tolerable and very fit; but it is too manifest that very often religion is professedly magnified, not to the lessening only, but even the nullifying and exclusion of what is called morality. As if the tables were again to be broken, by being dashed one against another; or as if there were such incompatible things in the laws of God, that it is altogether impossible that a man should carry it as does become him towards men with whom he has to do, but he must intrench upon, and offer violence to the duty he owes to God; or as if, on the other hand, the duty which immediately terminates upon God, must quite shut out the world, and whatsoever relates to men as men.

Though yet by the way too, it is to be noted, there is all the while a very great mistake and misapplication in the use of the term morality. And I wonder whence we or any of us have learned to appropriate moral to the duties of the second table; as if the duties of the first table were not as much moral as those of the second, and in a higher and more eminent sense so. Certainly he is but a person of bad morality that does not love God, and whose heart is not set upon him as the best, the supreme Good. It is a great injury to take the term moral, and affix it only or chiefly to the duties of the second table. I hope there is such a thing, which ought to obtain in our notion and practice, as being well-mannered unto God, or behaving ourselves well and fitly towards him. And that is the meaning of morality, when a man is in general well-mannered. Therefore he that behaves himself ill to God, doth very ill deserve the character of a moral man.

But the thing is, men intend civil by the term moral, and so mistake morality for civility. Civility indeed is only between men and men, as they are cast into societies one with another; but morality must needs run through the whole law of God. Every commandment of his law, which he hath distinguished from all other laws by vouchsafing himself to speak it by an audible voice, in ten words, to a vast assembly of men, we ought surely to account moral; and not elevate the authority or obligation of one part, by using terms with an intention to lessen or diminish another part of the same law.

But as to the thing itself, waving the name, (as it is pity there should be so much logomachy, or contention about the use or misapplication of bare words,) it is I say the thing itself, wherein the religion of Christians hath been so very deficient, and by which it hath been so much slurred that a great many have learned in their practice, not to care what their deportments are to men, so they can but keep up a continued profession of, and course of pretence to, sanctity, piety, and devotion towards God. And therefore the exigence of the case so much requiring it, and the text so plainly inviting to it also, it will be very fit to say somewhat of the duty of loving our brother in this latitude, as comprehensive of all the duty we owe to men as men. Though what I shall say at present will be in general. What is particular I shall refer to be enlarged upon in the use or application. And here I must hint to you that a twofold extreme is carefully to be avoided, that when we speak in this latitude of loving our brother we do not,

1. By that love to our brother so intend the inward principle of that love as to cut off the external acts of it; nor,

2. So confine the notion of this love to the external duties of the second table, as to exclude or shut out the internal principle. These are two extremes which men are very propense to run into, either into the one or the other of them. On the one hand,

1. Some are very apt to satisfy themselves that they are blameless, and not liable to exception, if their external deportment be fair and candid, just and equal, and also charitable now and then as occasion offers; though, in the mean time, there be no such thing as the inward root and principle of this love in their hearts. It would be as great an absurdity for any one to say, that this love doth virtually include and comprehend in it all the external duties that flow from such a principle, as it would be to state those duties so abstractly, as to exclude the principle itself whence they are to proceed. They no way answer the intention and design of the Holy Ghost in this matter, who only comply with the external part and letter of these laws, when, in the mean time, the spring and fountain of all these duties hath no place in the soul, namely, love itself. For the external acts may proceed from another principle. A man may carry himself justly to others, for the sake of his reputation; and from the same motive may do many acts that carry in them mercy, pity, and compassion to those that are in distress; but the principle from whence all this proceeds is self-love, and not love to his brother. Thus a man may do such and such an act of justice, such and such charitable actions, as the occasions of them are administered, merely because he would gain the reputation of being a most unexceptionably just man, a good natured man, a charitable man. And many apprehend that they are greatly concerned to do so upon the account of prudence, out of a prudential respect, I say, to their own interest and advantage; such especially whose way of living in the world depends upon trade and commerce with men. They know, if they do not obtain and preserve the reputation of justice, none will have to do with them; every one will shun them; they will be thought unfit for any kind of commerce whatsoever. This is one extreme therefore that is carefully to be avoided in this matter. When we say that love to our brother includes all the duties of the second table, yet we must not say it excludes the inward principle whence those external duties flow; that is, such a love to our neighbour as that which we bear and owe unto ourselves, as we know our Lord resolves it, in the forementioned scripture. The other extreme is,

2. That we lay not the whole stress of the business upon the internal principle, without the external acts and expressions: that is, that none should content themselves with the imagination and conceit, that they have in their own hearts and bosoms the principle of love to their brother; but in the mean while never express it nor let in be seen. No, that must be a great secret to themselves, and kept close in their own conciences; they have love in their breasts, but they can find no time or occasion to let it be seen: that is, they can, it may be, give him a good word, or as the apostle James expresses it, say to one in distress, that wants food or raiment, "Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled," (James ii. 16.) but give them nothing for the body. They say that they pity such and such persons; and perhaps there may be some low degree of pity, but not such as exerts itself and commands the consonant act which is agreeable to compassion, and should be consequent or ought to follow thereupon.

But we must understand this duty of loving our brother so as to comprehend the internal principle and external expressions of it together. It is necessary that there be a sincere love in the heart, and that it demonstrate its own sincerity by such expressions and discoveries, from time to time, as the providence of God gives us opportunity. As occasion offers we should, as the apostle exhorts, do good to all men, but especially to them who are of the household of faith, Gal. vi. 10.

And if love to man is to be taken in such a latitude as hath been said, if it gathers within the compass of it both the principle and all the actions that properly belong to it, we are not then to think we have a mean, low, ignoble object for our love. There is an image of God that man as man doth bear upon him. It is true, there is an image

that hath been lost, but there is one still that is not capable of being so. The spiritual supernatural image wherein man did resemble God in holiness was banished from the nature of man universally, till he was pleased to renew it, and make us his own workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. But there is besides that a natural image of God, which man still bears, inasmuch as he partakes of a spiritual, intellectual nature, resembling that of God. So that it is a noble object of love we have. We are to love men, even as God's own offspring, his sons, as he is the Father of spirits. There is in every man a spiritual nature, of which God owns himself to be the great Parent and common Father. Therefore to have a heart universally inspired with love to men as men, which flows even as far as the nature of man reaches and extends itself, even to all mankind, this, I say, we must understand to be the sum of the duty given us in charge under the expression of love to our brother.

We are to be lovers of mankind under one common notion; that is, to love upon a universal reason, which reaches to man as man, and so consequently to every man. "This is one of my own species whom I am required to love; of that rank and order in which God hath set me in the creation, and who all of us bear the image of the common Lord upon us." And you know it is the thing we find superadded, as the enforcement of one of the great precepts of the second table, namely, "Thou shalt not kill;" (Exod. xx. 13.) and a reason why the breach and violation of it should be punished, that "in the image of God created he man," Gen. ix. 6. Certainly the reason is the same as to all the other laws of that table. And besides what is appropriated to the conditions of some men by the very terms of this law itself, yet men as men, under that common notion, and for that very reason, are the objects of that required duty. As when we are forbidden to kill, is not every man whatever the object of that prohibition? When we are commanded not to steal, or bear false witness, are we not equally barred up from doing that injury to all mankind? When we are inhibited the coveting another man's property, is it not every man's property which we are thereby forbidden to covet? But then,

It must also be understood, that there is a stricter notion of loving our brother, to which we are to have a more particular reference, without excluding that more common extensive notion; (as there is no quarrel at all between things that are in subordination to one another;) that is, we ought upon the Christian account, in a special distinguishing manner, to love those who under that notion are to be esteemed or reputed brethren; I mean Christians, in the truest and strictest sense, as far as they appear so to us; that is, those who are the regenerate sons of God, who are the children of one and the same Father, and therefore are brethren one to another, on that account.

And you find that the apostle hath his eye to these brethren here, as it is manifest by many passages in this and the next epistles. If you consult the beginning of the next chapter, you will see who are to esteem one another as brethren in the most special sense. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten, 1 John v. 1. You see those are to be principally esteemed as brethren, who can look upon themselves and one another as related upon the account of regeneration, unto the holy, blessed God, as their common Father. So the notion of sons is manifestly taken in the third chapter of this epistle at the beginning. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! 1 John iii. 1. Those, who are God's own sons by gratuitous adoption, are to be accounted by us as brethren, if we have any reason to look upon ourselves as of that character. Those who are sons by adoption, and thereupon are entitled to the inheritance of sons, and are designed to that blessed state of the vision of God, and participation of his likeness, are characterized more eminently as his sons; which plainly tells us who are brethren to one another, and should, I say, be eyed and respected under that notion.

But here we must take heed of narrowing and limiting the object any further. This is limiting and restraining it enough, we need not do it any more. Many will allow this measure, that we ought to love a godly man, or one that bears God's image, as such; but they will after this be the measures of their own measure, or they will cut God's measure according to the square of their own fancies. And when they have said they ought to love a godly man as such, that is, every good man, they will have him to be of their own opinion in the smallest matters, one of their own persuasion and party, one of their own temper and humour. So that in short, upon the whole matter, that same Christian love, that ought to flow to all good men, to all Christians as such, is confounded with that which ought to be called the love of friendship.

There is a vast difference between the love, which does and ought to lie in common, between Christians and Christians, and that which should be particular, as between friends and friends. It is indeed true, if I were to design and choose out myself a friend, an intimate, one whom I would trust, and with him deposit my secrets and the like, I might warrantably enough make choice of one with those qualifications before mentioned; that is, as near my own temper as possible, or of such a lovely, amiable temper, as would render his friendship acceptable to me. I might choose one of as much prudence as I could, of my own rank and condition, whose ends, interests, and designs, lay very much the same way with my own. But it were a most unjust thing to think that Christian love ought to be so confined. That must run to all Christians as such, and under that very notion. So that it is not merely one of such a rank in the world, of such a temper and humour, of such or such a party, holding certain opinions in smaller and more disputable matters, that is the character of one who is to be loved as a Christian.

Though indeed that has all along been in all times, and among all sorts of persons pretending to religion, a very usual practice, to fix the church, and set the boundaries of God's house, just according to the measure of their own fancy, and of their own persuasion. So the Romanists will pretend to have the church only among those of their communion. And so we know there are others also, who would so confine the pale of the church. Besides, of others among ourselves there are not a few, who will allow none to be of the church but who will bear such external badges. One may as truly judge of a man by his clothes and garb of what profession or calling he is, and we may as well confine all human love and commerce to persons of such and such a complexion, as Christian love and converse to men distinguished only by certain external adjuncts. But I shall not here insist further on the extent and limitation of this form of speech, loving our brother. When we come to the use there will be occasion to say more on this head.

II. We are next to inquire, whence it is that any should pretend love to God, and yet be destitute of Christian or even human love to their brethren. We have formerly showed you that the exercise of love to God is a thing of far higher difficulty than that which terminates on men. Love to an unseen God is unspeakably more difficult in the exercise of it than towards men that we see, and have occasion to converse with daily. Now though this be most true and apparent, yet the pretence of love to God is much more easy than the real exercise of love to our brother. It is a far more difficult thing to love God, than our brother; but withal it is a far more easy thing to pretend love to God, than really to exert it to our brother. We have in the one the real exercise of love, and in the other case only the pretence to it. And there are two things particularly that do much more facilitate this business of men's making a show, and putting on a pretence of love to God, rather than really exercising it to men.

1. That it is more cheap, and less expensive. And,

2. It is more glorious, and makes a more glittering show than the other does; therefore men are a great deal more apt, and more easily induced to it.

1. It is more cheap to pretend love to God, than really to exercise love to our brother. It will cost them less. The things by which men acquire to themselves a reputation of love to God, may stand them in little; only to be at some small pains to get notions into their minds, by which they may be furnished with talk upon such and such subjects. They are not one straw the poorer for this, it costs them nothing. Their keeping up the external

duties of religion, going from time to time to Christian assemblies, waiting as much as they can upon the ordinances of God; all this may be done, and they be at no expense. There may be little or no cost in all this. But really to exercise love to our brother, will many times prove a costly thing. A man must deny himself, his own interest, gain and advantage very often, that so he may be just or merciful as the circumstances of the case may be.

And it is plain, the great temptations that men have to encroach upon the rights of other men, and intrench upon the businesses that come within this summary of love to our neighbour, are principally from self-love, and self-interest. Men would be just if they did not find or imagine, that they should gain by this or that trick, by putting this and that cheat and fraud upon their neighbours with whom they have to do. They would be charitable if it did not cost them much, if they were to expend nothing. And thus to pretend love to God is a cheap thing; but to exercise real love to our neighbour according as various occasions may be, to draw forth the principle into act and exercise, may frequently prove very costly and expensive.

2. There is also more of glory in the show, and glittering in the appearance, of religion, (in some times more than others, and it may be in our times as much as any,) than there is in the discharge of the duties of justice and charity to men. He that acquires to himself the reputation of a godly man, by an ability to discourse of godly matters, having gotten a great stock of notional knowledge, gains thereby also the reputation of a man of a very refined mind. As the gnostics in their age, an age of errors, were men of much pretence; had very high and sublime notions; but as to their morals they were as bad men as ever the world knew, if you will take the testimony concerning them, not from their professed enemies the Christians, who opposed themselves to them, but even from a heathen who characterizeth them at large (Plotinus.) There were not a viler sort of men, as to matters concerning the duties of the second table, and what lay between man and man. But they were men of high speculative knowledge, had very airy and sublime notions, wherewith they did seduce and captivate not a few. A great reputation was acquired by them of that kind, when they could recommend themselves as persons, who had made it their business to separate from the rest of the world, to give themselves up to the study of all wisdom, as the wise man's expression is, Eccles. vii. 25.

And as those men looked big and talked high in those former ages upon this account, I mean the reputation they had acquired for their knowledge and wisdom which they boasted of; so many do now, and think to make a glitter in the places where they live, as men of high, notional knowledge in matters of religion; but in comparison of this they think that to do good in a place where a man lives, to be a useful member of a civil, or a Christian society, to observe the strict rules of justice, charity, and compassion, are mean things and very low matters, compared with that glorious show and glitter, which the appearance of a great measure of notional, speculative knowledge casts upon men in their own eyes, and the eyes of them that are about them. Thus knowledge puffeth up, while true love would edify. But in the mean time that which so puffeth up makes a better show, than that which does substantially and solidly edify the soul.

It is too apparent a truth, which hath been hinted to you thus far, that there are persons, who upon such accounts as these, are easily induced to pretend to religion, and to make a show of love and devotedness to God, who are strangers to the effects of love to their brother. But from this so very apparent truth men are apt to induce as manifest and gross a falsehood; that is, because there are those who pretend love to God, that are found manifestly peccant as to the exercise of that duty which love to man would command, and ought to be the spring and principle of, that therefore all pretences to stricter religion than ordinary are hypocritical. No man who makes a more strict profession than his neighbours, and is more frequently conversant in the exercise of religion than they are, but he must needs be a Pharisee and a mere pretender, only because some such persons are manifestly capable of being convicted as such. But this is no more reasonable, than because there is some counterfeit coin in the world, that therefore all is to be rejected as false, and not current; or because spectres and ghosts have been seen to walk in human shape, therefore there are no true men; or as if, because some do hypocritically pretend loyalty and devotedness to the government, while they carry on conspiracies against their rulers, that therefore there is no way for others to approve themselves blameless, but presently to turn open and contemptuous rebels. This is strange kind of logic!

And in truth, none are honest men in their account, but such as will swear, and drink, and run into all wickedness and excess of riot with them. Of such a one they will be ready to say, "A very honest gentleman!" and then all the talk flies against such and such persons that addict themselves to a course of religion. And if some who are the notorious scandals of it have shown themselves to be what they are, then those who make it their business to keep up a course of strictness in piety and religion have the common infamous brand of hypocrites put upon them.

Now at this rate we must certainly quite turn the tables. Virtue must be called vice, and vice be called virtue, and the names of things be utterly altered. And we must account, that God's children and the devil's are to change families, fathers, and states one with another. For we shall have none left to be called honest men, or the children of God, but such as are no better than good-fellows; and all serious fearers and sincere lovers of God must be abandoned for none of his, only because some false brethren creep in among them.

And yet it very greatly concerneth those, who are actually and truly of the family and household, or the church of God by faith in Jesus Christ, though men do never so causelessly and injuriously scandalize the whole fraternity, upon the delinquencies of some false pretenders, to learn instruction by it, and to be abundantly more wary in all manner of conversation, upon the account of their calling him Father. All therefore that I shall by way of use leave with you at this time is the admonition of the apostle. If ye call upon the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear, 1 Pet. i. 17.

SERMON XIV.*

WE are endeavouring to show you, that their pretence to the love of God is both untrue and absurd, who love not their brother. And as to this we proposed to show in the

I. Place, how we are to understand the duty of loving our brother; that is, in what extent and latitude, and also with what restriction and limitation.

II. Whence it is that persons pretend to the love of God, who never loved their brother. We now proceed,

III. To show the falsehood and absurdity of that pretence; or to evince to you, that the pretence of love to God, where there is no love to our brother, is both false and absurd. That it is false is expressly enough said in this very verse, and we need go no further for the proof of it. "If a man say he loveth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." What need we more to prove this pretence false? That it is also absurd, is to be evinced to you from the considerations we shall give you for that purpose, which are especially two: namely, the necessary connexion that there is between the love of God and the love of our brother, in the nature of things; and the greater difficulty of loving God whom we have not seen, than our brother whom we have seen. So that it is absurd for a man to pretend, that he has mastered the greater difficulty, who has not overcome the less.

1. The absurdity of this pretence may be evinced from the necessary strict connexion there is between the love of God and the love of our brother, even in the nature of the things themselves. And here we shall show you that

* Preached November 22nd, 1678.

there is a fourfold connexion between them:—(1.) They are connected in respect of their object—(2.) In respect of their root and principle—(3.) In respect of their rule, and —(4.) Of their end.

(1.) They are connected in respect of their object. Love to God and love to our brother will be found to have in some sort the same object. I would not go about to prove any great affinity between the things themselves, but it is plain, I say, they have in some sort the same formal object. That is, our love to our brother, if it be right and true, falls in with our love of God; so as that our love of God must be the very formal reason of our loving our brother, whom we can never truly love, if we do not love him for God's sake and because we primarily love God.

The truth is, whatever specimens of beauty or excellence we find any where in the creature, we are then only said to love them duly, when our love is pitched upon them as so many rays and beams from the first and supreme Good. And so it is the original primary Goodness which we rightfully love, even in this or that creature. It is true indeed, goodness in its original, and in its descent and derivation, are not univocally the same. Nothing can be univocally common to God and the creature. But they are analogically the same. Goodness is primarily in God, and so descends, and is imparted to this or that creature. But it is only there by dependance upon him, from whom and in whom it originally is. And our love to our brother, in the strictest sense of that expression, is exerted, when it meets with that goodness, which is the most express and vivid image of God's own. We there love the representation of God in that subject wherein he has proposed himself to us as our pattern, even the excellency and glory of his holiness.

They that are in the strictest sense our brethren, as you have heard, are God's own regenerate sons; and because we are to love him that begat, we are to love them that are begotten of him, 1 John v. 1. And it is therefore to be observed, that elsewhere in this epistle, our states Godward are to be measured by this one thing, namely, our love to the brethren. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren,[b] 1 John iii. 14. So that if we compare place with place, it is very plain that the measure here is but *mensura mensurata*; that is, it is itself to be measured by a supreme measure, namely, our love to God. It is a mark or character, which itself is tried by a higher mark. "By this," says the apostle, "we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments," 1 John v. 2. So that no man may depend further upon this as a mark and trial of his state with respect to God, that he loves such and such his children, than as he is able to evince the love of them to be for God's own sake, and as they bear his image and likeness. And so the trial finally and ultimately resolves in this, "Am I a lover of God, yea or no?"

It is very true, that I may first and more sensibly have the perception perhaps of my love to this or that particular man. But I must run the matter higher, and particularly inquire, what is the reason I love this man? Is it because he is a good man? taking goodness in the strictest and most noble sense. Is it because he hath participated of the Divine goodness? and is a follower, imitator, representer of God's moral goodness, which is his holiness? We must be capable of concluding ourselves lovers of our brethren, as they are holy ones, as they bear, or appear to us to bear, the image of God. And hereby, and not otherwise, can we conclude our love to our brother to be of the right kind, by our being able to evince that we love God primarily and above him, that is, that we love him for God's sake. And whatever is to be said of any thing for such a reason, and only upon that account, is much more to be said of that reason itself. We do not therefore love our brother aright, if God be not loved much more; our love to God being the very reason why we truly and aright do love our brother.

Thus they stand connected in their object. You see they cannot be severed; and that a man cannot possibly love his brother aright, if he love not God: therefore the love of God must needs draw in the love of our brother, as a thing inseparably connected with it.

(2.) They are connected also in the root and principle, which in both is one and the same; namely, that very spirit of love, which is mentioned by Paul to Timothy, and which God has given us, as well as that of power, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. We must know that love to our brother is a fruit of the Spirit as well as love to God. We have an enumeration of the several fruits of the Spirit in the epistle to the Galatians, and love is set in the front of them all, Gal. v. 22. Now if you consider what fruits of the flesh those of the Spirit do stand in opposition to, you will find yourselves necessitated to admit and conclude, that love there, is not meant of love to God alone, but of that love which diffuses and spreads itself duly according as the objects are presented or do invite; in which the Divine goodness is found, in himself primarily, and derived to this or that creature, and especially to such as bear, as was said, the more lively image and representation of his goodness.

We are not therefore to think, that love to God is one gracious principle, and love to our brother is another gracious principle; but we must know, that it is one and the same gracious principle of holy love which works towards this or that object, according to the excellency and amiableness thereof; that is, proportionably to what I see of Divine goodness in it, which is the formal reason of my love. Holy love is the affection of love sanctified; which affection is not many but one, but yet turns itself towards this or that object according as the object claims and requires.

And therefore we find expressly that love to our brethren is resolved into the spirit of holiness, as its original cause, which is the thing that I would mainly and principally inculcate, that so it may not be looked upon as a thing of inferior nature; since we are too apt to look with a diminishing eye upon this duty of love to our brethren. It is really one of the fruits of the Spirit of holiness, a part of its production in renewed souls. See how expressly the apostle Peter speaks to this purpose. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently," 1 Pet. i. 22. So again we are told, that "the end of the commandment is charity (or love, for it is the same word that is rendered sometimes one way and sometimes the other) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," 1 Tim. i. 5. By the end of the commandment is meant the perfection, the top, the sum of it; or that which does virtually include all that lieth within the whole compass of the commandment. And what we are to understand by the word, commandment, which is expressed indefinitely, we may see in what follows; namely, that it is the same thing with the law. "The law," says the apostle, "is not made for a righteous man; but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane," &c. (ver. 9.) which supposes the commandment and law here to be meant of the law in its extent, as it comprehends both tables; not only our duty to God, but to our brother also. And therefore that love which is the *coronis* and very sum of it, goes to both. Now it is said concerning this love, taken thus extensively, that it must proceed out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned. It must proceed from that faith, which is peculiar to the regenerate sons of God. "They that believe are born of God," 1 John v. 1. "And as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 12, 13. Now this same faith is the immediate production of the Spirit in the work of regeneration. It works out into love, and even into that love, which exercises itself upon our brother. Love to him, I say, must proceed from faith unfeigned. Therefore when the exercise of love was required by our Saviour, in forgiving an offending brother; and the question was put, how often they should forgive? and he replies, "unto seventy times seven;" presently the disciples, as knowing the great need and exigency of the case, said, "Lord, increase our faith," Luke xvii. 5. There needs much faith in order to the exercise of such love.

Wherefore this love is in most necessary connexion with

what is intimate to the new creature, and what most essentially belongs unto the constitution of it. It is part of the work of regeneration, and of that holy creature, which is, when produced, called the new creature. You find therefore in that Scripture, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. where several graces of the Spirit are mentioned together, that brotherly kindness comes among the rest, in conjunction with faith, patience, and the like.

Yea, and to evince this a little further, you find that in this very epistle in which is our text, love to our brother, even an indigent brother, is called by the name of love to God; that is, not with reference to him considered as the object, (though in some respects, as was said before, God may be considered as the object too,) but in reference to him as the Original and Author of this love. "He that hath this world's goods," saith the apostle, "and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" 1 John iii. 17. It is as if he had said, it is plain, that this divine love, which God is the Author of, and of which this poor indigent brother is an object, is not in him, if he has no bowels of compassion towards him at such a time, when the exigency of his case calls for relief.

The apostle Paul tells the Thessalonian Christians, that concerning brotherly love they needed not that he should write unto them, "for (saith he) you yourselves are taught of God to love one another," 1 Thess. iv. 9. Sure we are not strangers to the import of that expression in Scripture, or what it is to be taught of God. The expression is paralleled by those which represent men as drawn by him efficaciously moved, and acted by his almighty Spirit. "Every one," saith our Saviour, "that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me," John vi. 45. That hearing and learning of the Father, is expounded by that of being drawn or powerfully attracted by the Father. Therefore the meaning of this expression, "You have been taught of God," is this; your hearts have been powerfully drawn by God into the exercise of this love to one another. "You need not that I write to you concerning this matter, for ye are taught of God." As in another case it is said, (the passage is taken from the prophet Jeremiah, xxxi. 31—35.) "They shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest," Heb. viii. 11. The same form of expression you see is used here, and must be taken in the same sense.

In the second chapter of this same epistle of John, ver. 20. we read of an unction of the Holy Ghost, by which the spirits of those who belong to God are so seasoned, and tinctured, that they are even connaturalized unto the truth; and this is the way of God's teaching, even to love, as well as any thing else. It is a mighty, potent work of that Spirit of holiness, by which men are taught to love. He teaches as none besides does. His way of teaching is by working in us the things that we are taught. And therefore they who think that whatsoever is required of goodness and holiness, may be the product only of human endeavour and acquisition, are to understand that we cannot do so much as this, without being taught so to do by the mighty power and Spirit of God; not so much, I say, as truly to love men as such, upon whom the stamp and impression of God's holy image is to be found. And indeed, they who think that all may be the effect of our own endeavour which is herein required of us, or of moral suasion, might learn better Christianity even from some heathens of Plato's school. A heathen philosopher, I remember, in one of his dialogues, discusses this question, Whether virtue is to be taught or not? And he undertakes to demonstrate, that it is not a thing to be taught, but is infused, or inspired by God himself. Particularly he says as to this virtue of love, love to good men, that it is a divine thing infused by God. And he gives the reason of this general assertion, namely, that whatsoever virtue any do partake of, it is not taught by men, but infused from heaven alone; "For, (saith he,) if it were a thing to be got by mere human teaching, then certainly good men might easily teach others to be good and virtuous; and only they must do it, because they alone have virtue, and so are alone capable of teaching it. But if they were capable of teaching it to others, nothing could hinder it but their envy and ill-nature; or unwillingness that any should fare as well as themselves. But a good man cannot be envious. Therefore, (he concludes upon the whole) virtue is a thing not to be taught, a thing that cannot be got by teaching." We see then how it is to be understood, when love, which is so great a part of it, is said to be taught of God. So that love to God and the brethren agree in their root and principle. They have there a firm connexion; so as that it is impossible they should be severed, or that a man can be a lover of God who is not a lover of his brother.

(3.) They are connected also in their rule, which is one and the same law; for indeed the whole law of God is summed up in love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," (Rom. xiii. 10.) as we had occasion to show formerly. And you see what the apostle means there by law, from the occasion of this discourse. "And this commandment have we from him, that he that loveth God, should love his brother also," 1 John iv. 21. He hath laid this law upon us, that we should thus dispense our love; that if we pretend to exercise our love to him, we must do it to our brother too. He will never otherwise take us into the *census*, or account of lovers of himself.

And when the apostle James insists upon it, that "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," (James ii. 10.) pray look back there, and see upon what occasion, and with what reference, he says this. "If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors," James ii. 8. You find he has reference to this very thing, our love to our brother; which is what he calls the royal law. The law enjoined us is this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And if we be found *peccant* as to this, and obey it not, nor comply with the authority of the law and the Lawgiver in this instance, we make ourselves rebels throughout; we break the whole law, and all that we do besides signifies nothing. Therefore he gives an instance. The same law that hath said, "Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill," ver. 11. The law doth equally and alike forbid inordinate love and unjust hatred: inordinate lust and impure love, as that which offends against one command; and inordinate hatred and ill-nature, which equally offends against the other, as it is the root of murder. In opposition to which this law stands, as the summary of all that duty, which we must understand to be implicitly enjoined in that law.

(4.) Love to God and our brother concentre and agree in one end; that is, the glory of God, and our own felicity: which two, you know, do make up the end of man. We ought to love God, in order to our glorifying him; and we ought also to love our brother, for the same reason. So we ought to love God in order to our enjoying him, and being happy and blessed in him; and in like manner ought we to love our brother, in order to our enjoying God, and being happy and blessed in him.

The glory of God first depends upon our loving him, but it also as truly depends upon our loving our brother. Yea this glory of God which is the end, and some way ought to be the effect, of our actions, shines a great deal more, sometimes, in the exercise of love to men. Thus saith David, "My goodness extendeth not unto thee, but unto the saints that are upon the earth, in whom is all my delight," Psalm xvi. 2, 3. As if he had said, Thou art never the better for it, but they may be. Here it is that we make the glory of God to shine forth in our course and practice, when we do visibly exemplify the goodness of his nature in our own goodness, that is, in doing good; in those continual fruits and acts of goodness, which issue and flow from the principle of divine love (with which our souls are possessed) to those that are related unto God, according as their relation to him is larger or more special, as we have formerly showed.

It is by our doing good that we show to whom we belong, though that goodness of ours can reach only to men and saints. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness:" (Eph. v. 9.) namely, that goodness which can flow and diffuse itself according as we have objects here below, upon which it may be continually pouring itself forth, and

spreading itself. Herein we bear testimony to God, that we are the very children of his love. We do, as it were, herein justify and honour our great Father. We own our Father, and own ourselves his children. Love, that ye may be the children of God, says our Saviour, who doth good both to the evil and the good; (Matt. v. 44, 45.) that is, that ye may appear to be his children. And again, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another," John xiii. 35. This refers to that more special love which we ought to settle upon nobody but those, who are particularly related and united to Christ. "You will own me in the world, and your relation to me; and I shall be owned and honoured among men by you, if ye love one another." And this was the character of Christians in the primitive times of the Christian church, "See how these Christians love one another, and refuse not to die for one another."

Yea, and again, our own felicity is promoted (which is another part of our end) by the love of our brother. For though God himself be the supreme felicitating object, yet he intends to be enjoyed by his in a community. He gathers them all unto himself in one body, of which body love is the common bond, the unitive thing which as it were embodies and holds the members together; being the same bond of perfectness the apostle speaks of, or the most perfect bond, which, says he, is charity, Col. iii. 14.

And the case is plain and manifest, that where there is a languor and deficiency of Christian or brotherly love, the way of access to God is obstructed and barred up. Such persons have no free converse with God. A Spirit that is full of rancour, under a distemper filled with animosity though but to this or that one particular person, knows not how to go to God. The new creature is starved and famished this way. The soul cannot heartily enjoy God, hath no liberty towards God. Therefore our Saviour considering the state of the case gives this general law and rule: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, (he speaks in the phrase and language of the Jews under the Old Testament administration, designing the instruction of Christians under the New,) and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, (thou hast nothing to do at the altar, there can be no commerce between God and thee except thou go,) and be reconciled first to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," Matt. v. 23, 24. Love must flow, and have a free course between thy brother and thee, or it can have none between God and thee. And if it were possible, how monstrous would it be, if in a man's natural body all the nutriment should be drawn to one side! Would any one think fit to feed and cherish but one side of himself? Especially, would the new creature cherish only a love to God, and at the same time famish what may be called the other side, a love to his brother? He attempts a thing impossible to be done; and it were extremely monstrous if it could be done, or should ever take place.

Thus far you see then, that by an inseparable connexion which there is, in these four respects, between love to God and love to our brother, it must needs be an absurd pretence that men make of love to God, who exercise not love to their brother also.

2. I proceed to speak briefly (and so shall shut up for the present) to a further consideration, whence the absurdity of such a pretence ariseth; which is drawn from the greater difficulty of loving God whom we have not seen, than our brother whom we have seen. It must needs be an absurd thing for a man to pretend that he hath mastered the greater difficulty, who hath not overcome the less. Which you see is the plain and full sense and meaning of the apostle's reasoning here.

But here it may perhaps be said, that "These two considerations do seem to contradict one another, or that the latter is repugnant to the former. For if love to God and to our brother be so connected as hath been shown, then how can it be that love to our brother should be less difficult than love to God? Yea and if there be such a connexion, as it appears there is, it may rather be said that love to our brother seems more difficult: for we can never truly love him, till we have first been brought to love God; and so we love our brother secondarily, that is, upon his account and for his sake." For the clearing of this I shall briefly say two or three things to you.

(1.) That when we say, love to God is more difficult than love to our brother, we speak not (as formerly you may have taken notice) of implanting the principle of this love; but we speak of the exercise of it. It is God that implants the principle, and all things are equally easy to him; but it is we that are to exercise it.

(2.) Whereas we cannot exercise it neither without his concurrence, we are to consider that concurrence of his with reference not to his absolute, but to his ordinary power. Not, I say, according to the extraordinary, but the ordinary workings of the power of God. And though it be true, that according to the extraordinary working of his power he can make it equally facile to love himself and any creature in which his image shines, and more facile or easy many times; yet according to his ordinary working, his people find by their own sad experience, that they have more to do in getting their hearts to act that way, than towards the creature, according to that degree of divine goodness which they can take notice of. But though this be clear enough, yet we answer further,

(3.) There are many persons, who in some degree love Christians and good men upon lower and less sufficient motives: and not upon the account of what peculiarly respects godly men as such. And we are principally to understand the apostle as speaking to such persons, as pretended to love their brethren, professed Christians, upon these lower motives. As if he had said, "You are not yet arrived so far as to love your brother upon motives sufficient to establish your love, though you see him as one, with whom you have sensible converse. Are you then got so high as to love God? Is it a credible thing you should be able to love an unseen God?" So that the pretence carries the same absurdity with it, as if one should pretend this or that more difficult thing to be easy and facile, when many things that are unspeakably more easy he cannot do or effect. As if a man should pretend it easy to fly to the stars, who cannot walk upright on his feet. Or as if another were vaunting to be able to outface the sun, whose eyes are perpetually dazzled with the light of a candle. A likely thing you should love God, whom you have not seen; who cannot so much as love your brother, whom you have seen, but upon the lowest motives! Wherefore these things have a connexion, and it appears from these considerations, that true love to our brother must be inseparable from the love of God. And so we have sufficiently seen the falsehood and absurdity of such a pretence as this is.

The *Use* of all remains; and for the present it concerns us to bethink ourselves and reflect, that whereas all of us profess and pretend to love God, (I presume there are none here but will avow themselves to be lovers of God, for to profess any religion is virtually to profess love to God; I say, we are concerned to bethink,) whether our want of love to our brother carries not in it a conviction of the falsehood of that pretence. The languishing of this love shows a deficiency of the exercise of that noble principle of love to God. Love to God cannot be fervent, when love to Christians is so cool and feeble. And we have not only reason to complain that love is cold, but that envy and hatred are flagrant and burning hot. So far from loving one another are Christians now-a-days, that they cannot endure one another, nor tell how to live by one another!

SERMON XV.*

THE truth which we have in hand from these words, I mean the last of those which have been proposed from them, is to this purpose; That their pretence to the love of God is both false and absurd, who join not therewith love to their brother. And here,

I. We have already shown, in speaking to this proposition, how we are to understand love to our brother; with what latitude, and with what limitations.

* Preached November 26th, 1676.

II. We have shown you whence it is that some may pretend to love God, who do not love their brother. And,

III. We have shown both the falsehood and absurdity of such a pretence: the former from plain words of Scripture: and the latter from such considerations, as do plainly demonstrate it to be a most unreasonable pretence, and therefore such as carries the most manifest absurdity with it

The *Use* doth yet remain. And that which I more principally intend is to put you upon reflection: to engage you to reflect upon yourselves, and the common practice, but more especially upon your own; to consider how disagreeable it is to that love, which we owe to our brother; that so we may lament the great miscarriage that is to be seen in the common practice of the world, and reform it in ourselves.

And consider as to both, since we all of us profess love to God, (as all implicitly do who profess any thing of religion, of which love to God is the very life and soul,) whether want of love to our brother doth not too generally carry with it a plain confutation of that profession. And that I may the more distinctly pursue this *use*, and more comprehensively, as to the cases and persons concerned, I shall, according to the double notion of the duty in the text, take notice how little love there is to be seen towards men as men, or towards Christians as Christians.

First, Towards men as men: whom we may consider either universally, that is all men in general; or indefinitely, that is, any man in particular with whom we have to do, or have occasion to converse withal.

I. How little love is there to be seen towards men universally considered! To love men as men, is to love them upon a universal reason, that extendeth or should make our love extend unto all men. As you know all the commandments of the second table are all founded in love, resolved into that duty, and gathered up into that one sum. And we find that this or that particular command being reduced thither, doth oblige us to duty even to men as men, and that upon a universal reason common to all men. As we instanced before in that one negative precept, "Thou shalt not kill," enforced by that universal reason, "For in the image of God made he man." The obligation of this in reference to the object, extends as far even as that natural image of God does; which, as an ancient speaks, "every man bears whether he will or no, and can no more part with it than with himself." It is indeed his very nature. But how little of such love is there to be found among us! How few true lovers are there even of their own species, who have a real and fervent affection (such as the object claims and challenges) for such as partake of the human nature with themselves! For I pray consider,

1. How little is our resentment of the common calamities of the world, whether in reference to their eternal or temporal concernments! How few regret it, or take it deeply to heart, that men are so generally without God in the world, and without Christ! That the knowledge is so imperfect among men of their own original, and of the end of their being; of him who made them, and what they were made for: That the knowledge of a Redeemer (the sweet savour of which the apostle tells us it was so much his ambition to have manifested in every place, 2 Cor. ii. 14.) is yet so little among men! Who regrets or lays it to heart, that the world is so filled with violence, barbarism, and blood? that a deluge and inundation of misery is with sin spread over the world, and transmitted and propagated from age to age, and from generation to generation? When we hear of wars and devastations, and garments rolled in blood here and there, how few are there who concern themselves for it, as long as they are quiet and at peace in their own habitations! And again,

2. How cold and faint are our supplications on the behalf of men so generally considered! though we are expressly directed by that exhortation of the apostle to make prayer and supplication for all men, 1 Tim. ii. 1. How little comprehensive are our spirits to take in the common concerns of the world with seriousness as the case requires! How little do we imitate the blessed God in this! for a general philanthropy, or kindness to men, is even a most godlike quality, and that wherein he hath represented himself as a pattern to us. And,

II. We may consider men indefinitely, that is, any with whom we have to do or converse with. And though there may be, as there ought to be, the inward workings of love towards men considered under that formal and extensive notion, yet there may not be so much as the external expressions and exercises of love to men considered this latter way. This external exercise of love requires a present object, determined by such circumstances, and such particular occurrences and occasions, as render it liable to the exercise of our love. So the apostle limits particularly our benefaction; "As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10. "The poor," says our Saviour, "ye have always with you, but me you have not," John xii. 8. A present object so circumstanced, is required for the exercise of such love as goes forth into external acts. We cannot ourselves actually do good unto all. We cannot reach all, for our sphere is not so large. The most we can do in that kind is by prayer to our utmost to engage a universal agent, who can adapt himself to every one's case and exigence. But within our sphere, I say, and in reference to those we have to do with and where we have opportunity, how little does there appear of love to men!

The rule according to which we are to exercise our love, is that royal law, as the apostle James calls it, to love our neighbour as ourselves, James ii. 8. Or as our Saviour elsewhere expresses it, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them," Matt. vii. 12. A rule that hath been very highly magnified even among some of the heathen; and the author of it also, our Lord Jesus Christ himself, upon the account of it. That is a known thing of the emperor Alexander Severus, who caused it to be inscribed up and down in the most noted places of his palace; and professed to bear so high an honour unto Christ, upon the account of his being the Author of so good a rule, as to desire to have him placed among the other deities. This indeed was designed before, but providence ordered it so as that it should not be said he came into so mean a copartnership for a Deity.

And that rule it is plain doth oblige us in reference to men indefinitely, or to any man whatsoever. For we would not only wish that this or that good man should deal well with us, or regret he should deal ill, but that any man whatsoever should do so. We take it ill to be traduced, detracted, oppressed by any man. And so we have the object of our love in that extent plainly pointed out to us. Now we might here show you, how this royal law is violated: namely, by such carriages and dispositions as are directly repugnant to love; or else by such a temper, disposition, and behaviour, which (though it doth not carry in it repugnancy to love, but would consist very well with it) proceeds from other principles, and not from a genuine and pure principle of love. And here,

1. We shall animadvert upon some things which are more directly repugnant to this love. As,

(1.) A morose unconversable frame and temper. When men are become unsociable, and nobody knows how to deal with them; such sons of Belial (as was said concerning Nabal) that one knows not how to speak to them. Such as, although it has been a proverb that every man hath two handles, have themselves never a one that one can tell how to take hold of them by. It is impossible to know how to converse with them, so as not to give them offence; always sour, captious, snarling, supercilious, and tractable on no terms. And this is a great deal more odious when religion is pretended for it; and when because they would be taken for persons more strictly and severely godly, they must needs therefore in their great zeal for such a reputation show themselves uncivil and humoursome. As if religion, which beyond all things else tends to cultivate men's minds and manners, must quite destroy humanity out of the world, and render men incapable of civil converse.

If we did but read and consider such passages of Scripture, where we are enjoined to be courteous, and kindly affected to men: or consider such instances and examples as that of Abraham treating with the sons of Heth, or that

of the apostle Paul's deportment towards Felix, Festus, and Agrippa: we should soon see that much acquaintance with God is in no way at all inconsistent with the most comely, fair, and even genteel deportment unto men; and that there is no inconsistency at all between religion, even at the very highest pitch, and a civil and ingenuous behaviour to them with whom we have to do.

(2.) We may instance in what is still worse, namely, an unmerciful temper and disposition, and a practice suitable to it. There is a heart that is hard as a stone, which hath no bowels, no compassion, even towards the most moving objects, which do from day to day occur. And this the apostle in this very epistle tells us very plainly doth argue the love of God not to have place in us. And again,

(3.) Injustice or unrighteousness is fitly reducible hither also as a violation of that royal law of love, inasmuch as love ought to be the principle of all the duties of righteousness. Else how can the duties of the second table be gathered up in that sum, as you heard before, of love to our neighbour as ourselves.

And here comes in all falsehood, the violations of men's words and promises, so that one does not know whom to trust; which is the thing that directly tends to break up all human society. For every thing of commerce between man and man depends upon human faith, as commerce with God depends upon a divine faith. A man that cannot trust in God can have no fellowship with him; and when there is no such thing as trust in men, there is no place for commerce between man and man. For if that should be once banished out of the universe, the world must disband, all human societies must break up; men must resolve to live as beasts, retired in cells, and caves, and wildernesses.

All that oppression also, extortion, and fraudulent commerce that are among men, belong to this head. If men did but love others as themselves, or if they would but do to others as they would be done unto, (which is the great measure of the exercise of love,) none of this would be.

(4.) We may add as another instance, furious passions, rash anger, and precipitous choler, and the contentions and strife which are so frequent, and so hotly maintained among men. And we may add to these, fretting envy, secret repining in men's spirits when others are better, or do better than themselves. This is a disaffection of soul, which, as some heathens have noted, speaks a direct quarrel with God and a fighting with him. Because a wise providence sees fit to favour such and such persons, therefore we will be sure to be none of their friends. And most of all repugnant to this duty of love are hatred, malice, revengefulness, a continual watching and waiting for opportunities to do others an ill turn, from whom we conceive ourselves to have received one. And I instance,

Lastly, in that from whence almost all this doth proceed, namely, inordinate self-love, which hath set all the world at variance. This is what the apostle means by lust; an affectation of drawing all to ourselves, by an inordinate and extravagant affection to which we indulge ourselves and our own interest, each minding his own things. And so, whereas we should each of us fill up the sphere we converse in with love, that so dwelling in love we might dwell in God who is love, most men shrink their sphere into one point. They make themselves the only object of their love; all is confined there, and terminateth there.[a]

And therefore, because men's private interests do interfere and clash with one another, hence it comes to pass that the world is filled with all those strifes, quarrels, contentions, wars, and blood, with which it is afflicted from day to day, and age to age. Whence are all these but from lusts? and what are those lusts all gathered up into one, but inordinate self-love, that knows no regulation, and will be confined by no just measures? It is a most apt and elegant expression of the Roman Emperor Marcus Antoninus to this purpose, who says, "Such an inordinate self-love is like an ulcer, or imposthumated part, that draweth all to itself, and starveth the body to which it belongs." But there may be also,

2. A violation of this royal law of love to others, not only where things directly repugnant to it are indulged, but also where there are external carriages which would well comport with it, while they proceed not from a principle of love to one another, as the root and fountain of them. As in the opening of the doctrine we observed to you, that so waywardly are the spirits of men affected, that sometimes they will make the principle exclude the external acts and expressions, and sometimes the contrary. Men may carry it fairly and without exceptionableness to others, but it proceeds not from the principle of love, but some other principle.

As for instance, with respect to acts of charity, some express their compassion to those who are in distress, by relieving them in their exigencies; but it is out of vainglory, and to procure themselves a name. They sound a trumpet before them, and proclaim that they give alms, as our Saviour speaks of the Pharisees. So a man will be just and square in his dealings, but it proceeds not from love to his neighbour, such as we owe to ourselves, but only from prudence; for if they do not carry it fair, they shall undo themselves as to their name and commerce in the world. Or it may proceed from fear; "I will not wrong or injure such a one for fear he should right himself upon me, and prove too hard for me at the long run." It may also proceed from deceit, and a treacherous disposition. They will carry it with all kindness to such till they can have an opportunity as it were to smite them under the fifth rib, as Joab did Abner, while he spoke to him peaceably, 2 Sam. iii. 27.

These are manifest violations of this great and royal law; that is, they may be manifest to the persons themselves who are guilty, if they would but allow themselves the liberty to reflect, and take a view of the temper of their own spirits. In the exercise of this kind of love, ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος, an unhypocritical love is required, love without dissimulation, Rom. xii. 9.

Now concerning all these things many are apt to think them but little matters. "They are but offences against men, say they, such as ourselves." Conscience as to these is little sensible or smitten in most men, because it is stupid, and cannot feel by reflections of this kind. But indeed these are very far from being light matters in themselves. They are things of dreadful import, if we consider what it is they argue or prove; that is, they argue little or no love to an unseen God. For thither it is that the apostle's argumentation directs us to run up the business. If it appear by these instances that there is no love to our brother whom we have seen; how can there be any love to God whom we have not seen? These things argue the little respect men bear to an invisible God, to an unseen Ruler and Lord. They argue how low the interest of the blessed God is among men, how little his authority and law do signify with them, and that men are sunk into a deep oblivion of him that made them.

These miscarriages, where they are more common, prevailing, and customary with men, are all rooted in atheism. Where there is but little respect to the duty between man and man, it is an argument there is a much less respect to that which we owe to the unseen God, the Lord both of them and us. It argueth, that when he hath settled an order in this world among his creatures, designed and appointed such a thing as human society, and directed that human love should be the common bond of that society; it argues, I say, a great want of respect unto God that men should make a rupture of that sacred bond, and so at once break themselves off from one another and from him.

This is a matter of dreadful consequence if we do but

[a] There is an excellent passage to this purpose, which I beg leave to transcribe verbatim from one of the author's discourses on self-denial, never yet published.

"Consider the great incongruity, yea, the monstrous incongruity, of this self-addictedness, that a creature should be addicted to itself; a creature, I say, be it as good and great as it will! For what is the creation itself, the whole collection of all creatures together, but a mere drop unto the ocean, the drop of a bucket! Such a minute thing, a little inconsiderable thing that sprung up out of nothing into something but the other day, now to set up for itself! Monstrous incongruity, horrid absurdity! most of all for that self, that most addict themselves to serve fleshly self. A fit thing to be a deity! a thing whose wants and cravings continually might convince one, that it is not nor can be alone. How does it hug, and cleave, and cling to a sojourning soul for a merely borrowed life! feeling itself going when the soul is going. Is this a fit thing to subsist alone; by itself and of itself?" And so the author goes on to show, that "to set up for ourselves as if we were born for ourselves alone, or as if we owed nothing to our brother, nor had any dependence upon God, cuts us off from him, and forfeits all interest in his common care."

run it up to its original, and lay the stress and the weight of the matter where it ought to lie. As was said of a certain country, "The fear of God is not in this place," (Gen. xx. 11.) where it was apprehended there was a danger of suffering violence in reference to property; so it may equally be said, there is no love of God in that place; that is, in that heart and soul where so many manifest violations are continually offered (habitually and without regret) unto a law upon which he lays such weight; a law which God has made so fundamental, and built the frame of so great a part of all our other duty upon it.

And it may be now upon all this, some will be ready to say; "Truly it is a very sad thing there should be so little love among men as such, and highly reasonable it is that such love should obtain more than it does." But they withal think it very reasonable that they should be dispensed with, especially in two cases; that is, where men are very wicked, or where they are enemies to them. In the former case they would be dispensed with upon the account of their pretended respect to God, who is injured by men's wickedness; and they would fain be excused in the latter case, upon a real but very undue respect to themselves, whom they apprehend to be injured by such and such persons.

Therefore I would say somewhat more particularly (before I leave this head of love to men as men) to these two cases; that is, to evince to you how great iniquity it is that such limitations should be admitted of as these; namely, that we would extend our love to men in general, except the more wicked sort of men, and also such as are particular enemies to ourselves.

I. As to the former, the pretence is more plausible; they cannot apprehend how they should be bound to love a wicked man. And yet I shall show you briefly what exercise love ought to have in that case, and upon what considerations; what place there is, and what room, for love to those who are profligately wicked, whom we are thus urged to love.

1. It is plain, negatively, that we ought not to love a man the better because he is a wicked man, and yet it is plain that most men do so. It is as ill to love a wicked man for his iniquity, as to hate a good man for his goodness; as Cain did his brother Abel, which is noted also in this epistle. For there are persons, "who (knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death) not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them," Rom. i. 32. But this is very remote from the temper of a gracious spirit. The Psalmist makes his solemn appeal to God concerning this case; "Do not I hate them that hate thee, O Lord? I hate them with a perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies," Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22. That is, barely considered as wicked, or upon the account of their wickedness and enmity to God; which is the thing upon which this professed, avowed hatred is founded. But notwithstanding,

2. There is room still for the exercise of love to such persons several ways. As,

(1.) Love ought to be exercised in assuaging and repressing of undue and inordinate passions, which are apt to tumultuate, even in reference to cases of that nature. A fretting corroding spirit, when we find wickedness and a prosperous state in conjunction, is most expressly forbidden. "Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass," Ps. xxxvii. 7. And again, "Let not thine heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long," Prov. xxiii. 17. The daily and assiduous fear of God will be a check able to restrain such an ebullition of spirit where it doth prevail.

In like manner a vindictive temper of spirit as to such is not allowed. There are those, many times, who cannot have patience till providence has run its course, when they see wickedness prosperously triumphing and lifting up the head, but with impatient heat they are presently for calling down fire from heaven to destroy such. As it was with those over-zealous disciples of our Lord, when entertainment and lodging were refused by the Samaritans. But see how our Saviour resents it, who rebuked and said unto them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," Luke ix. 55. There ought to be the exercise of love to the mitigation and depression of the inordinate workings of the heart in such cases. And also,

(2.) In serious and affectionate compassion, from the consideration of the tendency of their course, and of what these poor wretches are doing against themselves. The same compassion, I say, that we would have towards a distracted man, who we fear every moment will suffer by his own violent hands; and of whom we apprehend extreme peril, if he should be left a quarter of an hour to himself. These are persons that are likely to undo themselves, and in danger finally of piercing their own souls as they are wounding them every moment. The true spirit of Christian love to men as men, considered as never so wicked, ought to be exercised towards these persons upon that account, and because they are so. We reckon it as a very unnatural inhuman thing not to have great motions of pity and compassion, upon the hearing of towns, villages, and cities, in which pestilential diseases are raging, and tumbling thousands daily into the dust. But how much more dreadful is this case! and therefore how much more pitiful, compassionate love doth it require and challenge! And again,

(3.) Love should have its exercise in offering up very earnest prayers for them. It is a very sad case when the hearts and consciences of too many may witness and testify, that they could tell how to rage against such persons as they have observed to be wicked, and find their hearts ready to storm at them; but never can find, from time to time, an occasion to put up a prayer to God for them, who have no disposition themselves to seek for mercy to their poor souls. And,

(4.) In prudent and kind admonitions too, and rebukes, when providence administers the occasion; which is to be judged of by more rules and circumstances than our present design will suffer us to mention. But besides what hath been said, as to the particulars in which this love is to be exercised in such cases, the considerations to move us to the exercise of it are manifold. As for instance,

We ought to consider that such have human nature and reasonable immortal spirits, capable of service to God as much as ourselves, and also of being in God as well as we are. And what! is there no place for love to them, who are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and even of the same reasonable nature with ourselves?

We should also consider that we have a corrupt nature as well as they have, even the same corrupt nature. And if it has not broke forth into as ill practices, we owe it not to ourselves but to that mercy which distinguisheth persons, and doth exercise itself as it will. And it may be even as to practice too, such we have been in times past, as the apostle speaks of some of the Corinthian Christians, 1 Cor. vi. 11. Therefore the wickedness of such is separable from their nature, otherwise if we think the case better with us, how came it separable from ours?

Finally, Let it be considered, that God expresses a common love and kindness and indulgence to such. He does good to the evil and the unthankful, to the just and the unjust; and makes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon the one and the other, Matt. v. 45. Yea and his particular love hath fallen upon many such, and doth mostly fall upon such, where it does fall. For herein "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8. If God did not know how to love sinners, not indeed for their wickedness, but notwithstanding it; where were we, and what would have become of us!

SERMON XVI.*

WE have already shown from these words, that their pretence to the love of God is both false and absurd, who do not join with it love to their brother. And by way of use or application we have animadverted upon the common temper and frame, so very unsuitable to what this scrip-

* Preached December 8th, 1678.

ture plainly requires and calls for; namely, the little love that appears among christians in our days. And after we had pressed and recommended love to men universally considered, and shown also that we are obliged in our carriage and practice to show our love to men considered indefinitely, that is, every one with whom we have anything to do; it was observed, that some would fain indulge themselves in the neglect of this duty, and particularly in two cases think that they may challenge a dispensation. We therefore proposed to consider them severally.

I. The case of those who think themselves to be under no obligation to love wicked men, especially such as are persons of profligate wickedness. In speaking to which we have briefly shown what sort of exercise love ought to have in this case. The

II. Case is that of those who think they may be dispensed with or excused from loving those that are their enemies, which we now proceed to consider. In the former case, as we have observed, persons are prone to think they may be dispensed with out of respect to God, or on his account; in the latter case, out of respect to themselves. A great piece of hardship many think it to be compelled to love them who they know are no friends of theirs, but are continually contriving mischievous designs against them. What room or place can there be for the exercise of love in such a case, we shall here briefly show you, and then upon what considerations it ought to be vigorously exercised. On the former of these I shall not insist very largely.

1. There ought to be the exercise of love, even to enemies, in calming and subduing whatever is contrary thereunto in ourselves. All opposite passions, and the workings of them, must be restrained; every thing of anger, wrath, malignity, bitterness of spirit, revenge or vindictiveness more especially. Thus ought love to be exercised in the maintaining of a calm in our own minds and hearts, that there may be no tumultuations of any undue or forbidden passion upon any such account. Yea and again,

2. There ought to be love exercised in a more positive way; in forgiving or passing by whatever trespasses are done against us, as we expect to be forgiven ourselves. Love ought to be exercised to such even in doing them good; which is yet more positive. "Do good," says our Saviour, "to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you," Matt. v. 44. We should do them what good we can ourselves, and pray for them that they may have that good which we cannot procure for them. The order and gradation of this precept is very observable. We are first in general enjoined to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us; and then we are enjoined to do them good, and to pray for them. As if our Lord had said, "First do all the good you can to them yourselves; but when you are gone as far as you can, then engage and set on work an almighty agent by prayer. Pray that God would do them good when you can do them none."

We should take heed of looking on this as a Platonical chimæra; as a thing that can only have place in the imagination, or as a matter altogether impracticable. Christ has enjoined us no impracticable things. And there have been great examples in the world, that of his own and others, who have been so influenced by the grace of God as to give demonstration that this was no impracticable matter. And have we never heard of any that have rendered themselves remarkable on this account? of those of whom it hath been said, "No man could take a readier course to make such a one his friend, than by doing him an injury?" I believe some of us have heard of such instances even in these lower dregs of time. This we should then fix with ourselves as our resolution. "Doth any man make it his business and design to trouble and molest me? Is he from time to time seeking occasions to vex me? The next opportunity that occurs to me of doing that man a good turn, I will be sure to lay hold upon it. I will be even with him that way. If I can do him good, I will. This I would fix upon my heart as a law."

I will now proceed to give you some considerations that evince to us the reasonableness of such an exercise of love to our enemies; to such as bear us ill will, and are ready to do us an ill turn. As,

1. Consider it is the law and glory of Christianity to do so. That it is the Christian law is plain, and you have heard it already. You see how in the sermon on the mount, our Saviour reflects upon that mean, sordid, narrow principle of the Jews, which mostly in those times did possess and steer that people. "You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies," &c. Matt. v. 43. He then plainly, as to the matter of the exercise of love, takes away the distinction between neighbour and enemy. Our Saviour will allow no such distinction. And it is very plain, that by neighbour and brother he means the same thing in that fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, where expounding the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," (ver. 21.) according to its spiritual sense and meaning, he makes the object of that law to be our brother; plainly intending by brother all those whom it was unlawful to kill. "I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment," ver. 22. It is plain he means anger and killing with respect to the same object. We are therefore to love our enemies under that common notion of brother. This, I say then, is most clear, that our Lord Christ hath made this law with respect to enemies. Love them, bless them, pray for them, and do good to them, are his express precepts.

And it is the particular glory of Christianity, that such a constitution as this is, is to be found in it as a law. This must be acknowledged to be peculiar to Christianity. "To love friends, that is common to all men; to love enemies, that is proper to Christians;" as said an ancient in the Christian church long ago. It is true indeed such a temper as this hath been well spoken of among the heathen: but a great deal more praised, than practised; more applauded, than imitated. I remember one of them says, that "It is to imitate God himself not to hate any one at all, and more especially to terminate the exercise of our most fervent and complacential love upon the best." And we have heard of some who in lower things have done somewhat like this. As a great man of Athens, when on a certain night one followed him all along the street, reviling him and calling him most injurious and contumelious names, as soon as he came to his own house, he only commanded his servant to light the man home again. And every man must acknowledge it an amiable and lovely thing, when but a specimen has appeared, though never so faint, of such a kind of practice.

But I say it is the peculiar glory of Christianity to form and habituate the spirits of those who are sincere unto this temper; that so the instances of this nature may not be rare, and that love may be exemplified in men's course and behaviour, according as the occasions of human life do require. And who can but reckon it a glory? For is not every creature upon that account the more excellent as his spirit is more conformed unto God? It is with this enforcement that this law is given by our Saviour, in the verse immediately after the precepts before mentioned; "That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," Matt. v. 45. As if he had said, Love your enemies, and do good to them that use you ill, that you may hold forth a visible resemblance of God; that his image in this kind may appear and shine in you; and that it may thereupon be made known to all whose children you are, and by whom you are begotten; that it may be seen, that there is a nature truly divine conveyed and transmitted into you, and so inwrought into your temper as demonstrate you to be the children of God. Certainly it is the glory of a creature to resemble its Maker; and by how much the more it does so, by so much the more glorious is that creature; for what is the glory or excellency found in the creature, but the reflection and impress of the Divine excellency and glory? And again, in the

2. Place, let it be considered, that by this exercise of love to our enemies we make ourselves superior to them, according to the injunction which is laid upon us by the apostle: "Be not ye overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," Rom. xii. 21. The latter part of the verse we may take notice of by and by. All the while that a

man can continue and keep up a spirit of kindness, and benignity, and goodness to his enemies, it is plain he is not overcome; he is upon the upper ground, and hath unspeakably the better of them. And it is the easiest and surest defeat of malice that can be imagined or thought of. For it is certain where an ill-minded, mischievous person doth bend and set himself against such a one as you, he will not only set himself to hurt you but to vex you. It is not only your hurt that he aims at, but he would disquiet you, and put your mind to torture. So then it is plain, let a man have never so much hard usage from another, if there are manifest evidences that his spirit sinks not, but rather that he maintains a great spirit under all, it retorts the vexation upon him who designed it, and he himself alone is vexed who aimed at that design Therefore he still keeps the superiority in this case, the temper of whose spirit remains within him placed, calm, and undisturbed; free from any unmanly, and most of all unchristian, passions.

And it is love which hath that dominion, that it will not let such impure and unbecoming things as envy, hatred, or malice, come into that state, which is all made up of goodness, kindness, and love. The strength of that gracious principle, working with its due vigour, expels and keeps them from coming into the soul, or making inroads there. And all this while there can be no vexation, no disquietude, in the spirit of such a one. It is fortified, and so strengthened as to shut out whatever would disturb and break the peace within. And so he that hath set himself against you hath not his design, because you are not overcome by him.

And to be sure whatever hand the devil hath in such attempts he is defeated; for he only desires you should sin against God, which certainly you do when you admit of any breach of charity. He does not care whether it be well or ill with you in external respects, only as it is a means to induce you to commit sin. So that if he stirs up a quarrel between any one and you, his design is to transfer it between God and you; and having put it into the heart of any one to be your enemy, he would fain excite enmity in your heart against him, so as to render you God's enemy. This is the design he wholly aims at. Now he is defeated thereof, when your spirit remains conform to the law of God in this case; and you are not conscious of any evil temper of spirit towards them, who are, in the mean time, working you all the michief that they can.

3. This temper of spirit carries in it, and a suitable deportment expresses, a holy, great, and generous independency upon external things. For any man's ill will to you, and whatsoever effects there can be of it, are all to you external things. Such a temper of spirit then, I say, shows your independency upon all outward things, and a superiority unto all external good and evil: that you do not take yourself to be greatly concerned in matters that are so foreign to you as such a man's ill will or any ill effects thereof. For whether can they reach if you do not betray yourself, or be false to yourself? "Fear not them that can kill the body only, and after that have no more that they can do," Luke xii. 4. We are addressed to there as if we were hardly to reckon the concernments of the body any part of our own concerns.

So indeed some heathens have been wont magnificently to speak, reckoning up such things wherein good and evil may be said to consist; and upon stating the notions of the one and the other, all the good and evil things of the body are cast out of the account. "For," says one, "do you think I take my body to be me, and this flesh to be *myself?*" And so another, "They can kill me, but they cannot hurt me." So when one was to be beaten to death with hammers and axes, he cried out, "Strike on! thou mayest break in pieces this vessel of Anaxarchus, but him himself thou canst not touch." And another discoursing upon that question, *An injuria sit referenda?* denies it peremptorily, and reasons against it most strongly. "A good man," says he, "is neither capable of being affected with injury, nor of affecting any one with it. Injuries can properly have place only among ill men, who are upon that account offenders and breakers of laws. But among good men there is no one that can do an injury because he hath that virtue that will not let him; and he cannot suffer injury neither, because his virtue keeps it off, so as that it cannot have access to his spirit. It cannot invade or disturb his inward man. There is nothing to be detracted or taken from him by such an injury. For as to external good he doth not reckon it his, he cares not for it, and so parts with it without loss."

Thus many of them have talked at a high rate, but it is the great concern of Christians that they may feel in themselves what may answer the import of such expressions; and as one said, "Live rather than talk great things." And certainly it is a great thing when the temper of a man's spirit is such, as that in all his course he shall discover an independency upon externals; so as to hold it forth that he is little concerned with, or moved by any kind of good and evil as can only reach the outward man, which ends with his life, and will shortly be as if it had never been.

Such a temper of spirit as this is will soon keep a man out of the reach of this lower and more troublesome sphere. He is above, liveth in another world, in another region. His mind and spirit are not within the reach of storms and tempests, but above that region which is liable to the stroke of such things; and so he continually keeps the possession of his own soul. It is a dominion over himself, a dominion in himself, the peace and tranquillity of reason that such a man enjoys. Thus says our Saviour, "In your patience possess ye your souls," Luke xxi. 19. That is a thing not very remote and alien from that temper of spirit that we are speaking of. For what think we patience is? It is not a mere sturdiness of spirit, a stoutness by which we are able to endure whatever comes; but it is that sweet and pleasant tranquillity, that repose of rest and spirit, by which it remains undisturbed whatever evils fall out to be our lot in this evil world. It is not merely to be able to bear, but to bear well; to bear becomingly and with a composed and quiet temper of mind, which admits no ill impression or resentments under what it happens to be our lot to bear.

So it falls in with love, and is animated by it. Love is the life and soul of it. Patience towards him by whom I suffer evil, is influenced by love to him; and then that evil which I suffer by him signifies nothing. And it is by this I possess my own soul; otherwise, I am not master of myself, but am an impotent slave to this or that passion, raised and stirred up in me by this or that outward affliction. And thus I betray myself to an injury, which otherwise could not hurt or touch me. And again,

4. It is further to be considered, that the person that maligns me, or suppose them to be many that do so, they may yet have many excellencies, and on other accounts may be very worthy persons. And it would be a useful consideration, to keep and preserve a good temper of spirit in us, and to quicken love to its due exercise, if we would turn off our eye from that one particular thing, the ill will they bear to us, and look upon the many things that are good and commendable besides. And whatever real goodness there is, that doth certainly challenge love. For what! do we think love is to have its exercise no where, but where there is perfect goodness? Then are we to love no creature at all.

What if in that respect we apprehend such a man to be evil or to do evil, who bears ill will to us or to our way, and those who bear our character upon them; yet may they not have very good things in them besides? Such may be sober, prudent, learned persons, and useful men in the world. And what! must all that good be lost and buried, only because they have some particular animosity and ill will to us? It is too much to take our measure of what is to be loved, and what not, by ourselves and by our own interest; and it would argue a very private and narrow spirit, that we should judge of what is lovely and commendable, only by what has reference to us. We have no reasonable warrant to do so.

And perhaps it is a disputable thing that such and we differ in; and it is not altogether impossible, that they may be in the right, and we in the wrong. And it becomes such persons as we are, conscious to ourselves of human frailty, not to be too confident that every man is in the wrong who opposeth himself unto us. At least, it would become the modesty of Christians to search so much the more, and inquire the more diligently into the matter, that they do

not a double injury by being opposite to such persons wrongfully at first, and then persevering in it; and letting an unworthy, unsuitable temper of spirit obtain thereupon, and take place in them.

5. Suppose we be unjustly maligned by certain persons, then we have certainly God on our side; and consequently have a very good cause if we do not spoil it. If such and such bear us ill will, and we on our parts maintain the law of love inviolate, we are well as to the matter we suffer for, and we shall be tolerably well as to the manner of suffering too. Suppose we suffer hard things through their ill will, this is not so much, so we do but quietly bear our wrong; but if we miscarry here, we perfectly spoil a good cause. Whereas before we were right as to the matter, now as to the manner of our suffering under any one's displeasure, we have involved ourselves in guilt, and consequently have done so much to disoblige God from interesting himself for us. And certainly then we have done very ill for ourselves.

6. If we do suffer the displeasure and ill will of any unjustly with the effects thereof, and yet keep up love in our own hearts, those persons who injure us, do first a great deal more injure God. Therefore we have all the reason in the world to turn private, selfish anger upon that account, into a resentment of the indignity and offence done to the common Ruler and Lord of all. And certainly by how much more the exercise of our spirits worketh out towards him, his interests and concernments; so much the less shall we find ourselves prejudiced in our own spirits, by what does more directly tend to us, and hath an aspect that way. We shall less consider that he hath injured us, and so be less tempted to render ill for ill, and hatred for hatred. He hath injured him that made him as well as us, which is a superior thing and a greater crime. And therefore that anger which turned the other way before, ought to turn against the dishonour that is done thereby to God, and into pity of the offender, upon the account of the anger of God incurred thereupon. And it ought to be considered further,

7. That if any such do never so unjustly malign us, and therein wrong us, they wrong themselves much more. That would be a great allay to our passion, to consider they slightly hurt us, but greatly hurt themselves. They are more injurious to themselves, than to those they design hurt unto. They do us but some external injury, but they wound themselves to the heart and soul. Sure then there ought to be that love in us, which should work pity in us upon that account. Nay further,

8. We ought to consider that if they have wronged us, we have at one time and in one way or other wronged ourselves worse. We have done ourselves more wrong, than all the men in the world or the devils in hell could ever have affected against us, with their combined powers. If we have long lived in this world strangers to God, wandering from him who is our life; if we have lived in impenitence, disobedience, and rebellion to him, and strangers to his converse; we have then infinitely more wronged ourselves, I say, than men or devils can possibly do. And yet we can tell how to love ourselves for all that. Why then shall we not know how to love them who do us unspeakably less wrong, and are in no possibility of being so prejudical to us as we are to ourselves? We can be indulgent to ourselves, who have done more wrong and hurt; why not to them who have done us less?

9. We shall do ourselves a great deal more wrong than it is possible for them to do us, if we requite them with ill will, and do not maintain the law of love inviolate to them. We shall do ourselves a greater injury than they can make us suffer, though it were in their power to do as much as one creature can do to another. For they can but hurt us externally, unless it be our own fault; but we hurt ourselves internally, if there be any unbecoming passion working or raging within. And what reason is there, because one giveth me a light scratch, that I must therefore give myself a mortal stab? And yet further consider,

10. That whatsoever exercise our love shall have in his kind it will rebound upon ourselves, and turn to our own great advantage. For, in the first place, we shall have present peace and tranquillity within, which is a great reward; and we shall be also entitled unto that reward which is future, as all sincere obedience is, by the law of God and the Redeemer.

(1.) There is a great reward in this temper of spirit which it carries in itself. For do but consider what it is plain the law of Christ requires in this case. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you," Matt. v. 44. Let us allow ourselves to pause here a little. What advantage is there in this temper of spirit, whereby a man without forcing, or straining the habitual frame thereof, desires the fulness of all good to them, who perhaps rashly or injuriously wish all harm to him! Certainly the very sense of those words, "Bless them that curse you," if they were but transferred into and impressed upon our souls, is of unspeakably more worth than all the wealth of both the Indies. For a man to bear that temper of soul in himself, and to be able on reflection to conclude, though he be assaulted on all sides by the unjust displeasure of men, that there are yet no other but good propensions of kindness and mercy, tenderness and compassion, and a readiness to do them all the good he can, as soon as ever he has an opportunity; the pleasantness of such a temper, if known and experienced, no one would change for the greatest advantage this world could afford him. How happy is it to be able to say with the apostle, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat," 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. As if he had said, "He that looks into our ways, nay into our breasts, shall be able to discern nothing but calmness there; even an undisturbed composure of spirit, and benignity towards them who are full of malignity to us." And,

(2.) This is that temper of Spirit also to which the blessed God hath particularly promised a reward. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee," Prov. xxv. 21, 22. Rom. xii. 20. It may be the person himself will not reward thee for so much good done to him. Concern not thyself for that; if he will not, God will. The Lord will reward thee for all that good which thou hast done, in lieu of the evil which he has done to thee. And I add,

Lastly, In this way you may quiet conquer him at last, to whom you exercise love to that height. And how glorious a conquest is this! The apostle says in the forementioned place, which is quoted from the Proverbs, that you shall by this means (by returning good for evil) "heap coals of fire upon his head." I know there is a controversy about these words; some understand them in a good, others in an evil sense. Some say thereby is meant, that you shall engage God on your side, and his wrath and vengeance shall vindicate your quarrel. Others think that we may understand by coals of fire, the melting warmth of love; which will dissolve and mollify the obdurate, malicious spirit of the unjust adversary. And I for my part make little doubt but that is the meaning, and I am the more induced to believe it from what we find conjoined in both these Scriptures. It is in the Proverbs, "The Lord shall reward thee," as one that has been a subordinate benefactor to himself; who doth good to those, who carry it very ill towards him. But to this passage quoted by the apostle is subjoined this exhortation; "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." Your goodness makes you glorious conquerors, and will melt down your enemy, and subdue him to you at the long run.

And there is no way wherein we can contribute so much to the accomplishment of God's promise, to wit, "If a man's ways please the Lord, he will make his enemies be at peace with him," Prov. xvi. 7. And we have the most reason (though we are not to limit God as to the time or method of working things) to promise ourselves a happy issue and success this way, that is, to make our enemies at peace with us; when we in our whole deportment express and hold forth nothing but benignity, kindness, and sweetness to them, however harsh in their words and actions they are to us.

And we ought to bethink ourselves, too, (with which I shall conclude,) that let us be put to forgive them never so much, God has forgiven us more. It is impossible they

should ever offend us so much as we have transgressed against him. Therefore let us not grudge to extend our love to our enemies, for if God had not done so to us, what had become of us? Miserable creatures had we been! "When we were enemies Christ died for us." It was for enemies he laid down his life, and exposed himself to those cruel sufferings which he underwent. And when we expect eternal life by him, who hath done so much for enemies; will we not, at his word, and upon the obligation of his own law, conform our spirits and practice to our utmost herein? For it is impossible we can have any enemies so injurious to us, as we have been to Christ; all which injury and wrong he is yet willing to bury in everlasting oblivion.

SERMON XVII.*

THE truth which we have more lately handled from these words is this; That their pretence to the love of God is both false and absurd, who do not conjoin with it love to their brother.

We have insisted a little upon this doctrine, and have made some progress in the use, which was mainly intended to be this; namely, To animadvert upon the common practice of the world; and especially to put us upon animadverting on our own practice, wherein it is contrary to the law of that love, which we are required to exercise towards our brethren, considered as men and as Christians. We have already, in the

First place, shown and complained that there is but little of that love which ought to be exercised to men, as men, and we have particularly spoken to two cases, wherein many would plead an exemption; namely, the case of those who are profligately wicked, and of those who are their particular enemies: and we have showed you how reasonable and necessary it is that love should be exercised to them as men, notwithstanding either of these circumstances. We are now to speak,

Secondly, According to the other and more restrained notion of brother, to that love which we should have for one another as Christians; or which should be generally exercised by us upon a Christian account. And is it not worth our while to take notice, how the law of such love is most commonly violated among them who bear the Christian name, and to give instances hereof? We will do this in two kinds. That is, we shall give you both privative and positive instances, and let you see by both, how the law of love is too frequently broken and intrenched upon, even as if it were not a sacred thing.

I. We shall give you some privative instances of this, wherein persons appear not to do what the law of love doth require. As,

1. When the object of this love is mistaken; that is either stated with too much latitude, or else is too much narrowed and limited.

(1.) I say when it is stated too largely, and men do give exorbitant measures of Christianity. There is a love to be exercised to all, as you have heard before; but there is, many times, a very unwarrantable extension of the notion of Christianity. There is so manifestly, when persons think the very assumed name itself a criterion enough of a Christian, and so would stretch that which is peculiarly Christian love to a proportionable latitude. As very often the Christian name is assumed, and taken on by such persons as understand not, nor believe any more of the Christian religion than mere pagans. As to them, it is by mere hap that ever that name comes upon them. As if it were enough to make a Christian, only to live on such or such a turf; or as if because they think it fit and convenient to call themselves Christians, therefore they must be accounted as such; and under that consideration be owned, respected, and loved as such without any difference, though all their practices hold forth nothing less than a perpetual avowed hostility unto Christ, as it is with too many others.

I would indeed allow to that profession as much of respect as can, with any appearance of justice, be understood duly to belong to a name; and such are to be loved suitably to the state and condition they are in. But totally to mistake their state and condition, and then to exercise love to them without discrimination according to that mistake, certainly there is a great injury done in this case, especially where the case is so very apparent, that persons more significantly show themselves what they are by what they do, than can be known by what they are called. And then,

(2.) When the notion of Christianity is too much narrowed and restrained, or of those whom we are to account and love as Christians. The whole Christian fraternity is confined by some of those of their own party, or particular way and persuasion in respect of some little things, altogether extra-essential and circumstantial only to religion. And so Christian love comes to be confined to, and is exercised only within, this little circle. This is a very great injury on the other hand; and the same thing in effect as to say, Lo, here is Christ, and there he is; yea, it is to say exclusively, Here he is, and no where else! And it is as great a fault to say he is not where indeed he is, as to say he is where he is not. Love to Christians, as Christians, surely ought to run a larger course. And again,

2. When the principle of love doth languish. Suppose the object of it to be stated never so rightly, without any error or mistake, the languor and decay of the principle does every whit as much intrench upon the law of love, and is a more injurious violation of it, than a mistaking the object. When love so exceedingly fails among Christians, as such, that upon reflection it is hardly to be known whether any such thing be alive or at work or no; when, I say, our love so waxes cold, it is, as our Saviour intimates, a time of great iniquity. And it is plain he means it of that love that ought to have its exercise to Christians, fellow-Christians, and not merely of love to himself. For in the context you will find him speaking of persons betraying one another; and hating one another; and then he adds, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," Matt. xxiv. 12. And indeed the cause is very manifest and obvious to be from thence, from the abounding of iniquity.

He that loveth a Christian as a Christian, must be understood to love Christianity itself proportionably more. That which makes a thing such, is more such; that which makes a person lovely, is more lovely. To love Christians as Christians, is to love their religion. But now, when once the iniquities of the times abound, many who loved professors before grow cool in their love. It was taken up for their conveniency, and it is laid down for their conveniency, according as may best serve their turn.

Now this coldness of love among Christians considered as such is a dreadful token, how little and slight an account soever is made of it. The law of love doth not only say, "Love your brother, or one another; but with a pure heart fervently," 1 Pet. i. 22. And it is not a little that is contributed to the life and vigour of religion itself, by the vigour and lively exercise of this love. Therefore this great duty is recommended upon this very account, and with this design, that our hearts may be established in holiness. "The Lord make you increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints," 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13.

3. An unaptness to take care of avoiding offences among Christians is another breach of this same law of love. Too many lay no restraints upon their spirits in this matter at all, or have no consideration of the case; never saying, "Shall I offend by this or that, or shall I not?" And others are as faulty in being apt to take offence, where the matter carries none in it. They are testy, froward, and captious, so that no one knoweth how to converse with them, or careth to have to do with them, or to be of their society. And again,

4. That I may hasten through many things, which I would at this time say to you in the close of all this long

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discourse, a very great difficulty either to give or receive satisfaction, is very unsuitable to the love of our brother.

To give satisfaction; how are the spirits of many straitened and bound up in this case, by their own pride and self-conceit, and the great opinion which they have of themselves! As if it were a far greater reflection to say, "Sir, I have done wrong;" than it is to do another wrong. Or that men must needs give out themselves to be of something above a mortal human race, that it is impossible they should ever have offended, or ever do amiss. How great mischiefs would one such word as this sometimes prevent, among those with whom we have a familiar converse, "Sir, I confess I have not done well in such a thing, pray pass it by!" That great precept of confessing our faults to one another, and praying for others, (Jam. v. 16.) how is it quite thrown out of doors now-a-days! how rare instances are there of any such kind of practice!

And there is as great an unaptness on the other hand to receive satisfaction. Persons insist highly upon the wrong, and cannot abate so much as one punctilio. Such things as forbearance and forgiveness, where there is an offence and wrong done, how little do they obtain in common practice in our time! And it is amazing to think that the moving enforcements which we have in Scripture of that one thing, should signify so little among us. Forgive ye one another the trespasses that ye commit one against another, even as God for Christ's sake freely forgave us. Oh what! should not such a consideration as that is prevail with Christian hearts to forgive, when it is considered how freely God for Christ's sake is said to forgive us? "Be ye kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 32. Col. iii. 12, 13. And again,

5. A mutual shyness and strangeness to one another, without a sufficient cause, is also unsuitable to this brotherly love. Many Christian friends grow of a sudden strangers to one another, and no one can tell how or whence it should be. It may be the person that is passive in the case is altogether at a loss to account for it. For a long while he observes such a one to grow a stranger to him, and he cannot devise what should be the reason, or whence it should proceed, but upon a surmise. As if it were so great a difficulty to ask a person the question, Is it so? or if so, were it well? But instead of this, alienation must be the next thing, the first thing done without any more ado.

How intolerable is this among Christians! And surely if we should live to see a day wherein the Christian community should be scattered, and we tossed and driven to and fro, it may be it would be a grateful sight to meet such a man, to see such a face in a wilderness or upon the tops of the mountains, whom formerly we could not endure. Cordial then perhaps would be the embraces amongst those persons, who almost mortally hated one another before. We have reason to pray to God that such distempers of mind among us be not thought fit to be cured by such means.

6. Another instance is neglect of mutual admonition and exhortation among Christians concerning known sins or manifest neglects of duties. We know that this is frequently pressed in Scripture, and the charge and weight of it is laid upon our love. Yea, to neglect this is an interpretative hatred. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him," Lev. xix. 17. How often are we called upon to exhort and admonish one another! "Exhort one another daily while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13. And how strange a thing is it, that any should take upon them to pass over such commands as these, as if they were reversed, as if they were repealed, as if such laws were abolished! Do we take upon ourselves arbitrarily, and at our own pleasure, to abolish the Bible? or to abandon in our practice things as plainly pressed upon us, as any thing in the world can be? And how little is it considered how great a share such persons as neglect this duty of admonition, have in the miscarriages of such as they converse with? How much do they partake of their sins! "Such a man would have been a more reformed man, less passionate, more orderly in his family, not so light and vain, if I had but, when occasion was offered to me, dropped a seasonable word to him." And so instead of having the benefit of Christian society and partaking the fruits of one another's graces, we partake of one another's sins, and share the guilt with them. That is a sad part of Christian community.

And there is many times as much fault in the undue manner of reproving, as in the neglect of the thing itself; when it is done in so proud, and imperious, and passionate a way, as if the design was not to correct such a man's faults, but only to vent my own passion. Or while I pretend to mend the faults of another, I myself shall commit a greater. For it may be, the fault in the manner of reproving, is greater than the matter which I take upon me to reprove. But when this duty issues from love, and is so managed as that it may plainly be seen to be the product of love, then as it is in itself a great duty, so a great blessing doth often accompany and go along with it.

7. The neglect of doing good and kind offices for one another, as occasion doth require and call for, is altogether unsuitable to this law of love. For you know how we are charged and required, as we have opportunity, to do good to all, but especially to those who are of the household of faith, Gal. vi. 10. And undoubtedly the apostle, using expressions of such import as he does there, is not to be understood as if he meant that this kindness, or doing good, was to be confined to the poor and indigent only, or to necessitous persons; though that is one great part of the sense: it is then to be referred to those good offices we should do to all who stand in need of our help, though it may be they are not indigent; but notwithstanding are the objects of our love, in such or such a particular case, wherein they may possibly receive assistance from us. But when persons are bound up in themselves, and so are little capable of minding any one's interest but their own, how greatly is love hereby suppressed, and stifled in the exercise of it! But besides these privative instances,

II. We shall give some positive instances too of the violation of this law of love, and so hasten to a close. And,

1. Hard thoughts and rash censures of one another do very little comport with the love that should be exercised towards brethren. With respect to their particular actions, words, or expressions, we are many times guilty of great injustice, and wrong is done to this law of love. That is, when upon this or that action that we see done by such or such a one, it may be against our inclination or judgment, we put the worst construction upon it that we possibly can devise. So in like manner we are faulty when we torture the words of another, and wiredraw them, that we may if possible make them speak a bad sense, when it may be a much better might be put upon them. Persons also are guilty in this regard, when they are prone to load the differing opinions of others in some smaller matters with the most odious, and many times with the most ill-grounded, consequences; putting them as it were into bears and wolves skins, (as some did the Christians in the primitive times,) that they may be the more exquisitely worried, and torn all to pieces.

But the matter rises many times much higher than this; and men proceed, upon some small matters of difference, to pass censures concerning such and such persons, as to their states God-ward. They sit in judgment upon their souls, and pass determinations concerning them in reference to their very life or death. And yet it many times so happens, that such as contend for that small matter of difference are hypocrites, and they that are against it are hypocrites also. The one party is censured and judged as formal, superstitious hypocrites; and the other as phantastical, self-conceited, perverse hypocrites: and nothing less than the charge of hypocrisy will serve the turn, in this case, on the one hand or the other. So persons arrogate to themselves the peculiar business of the Almighty. But "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? (This is spoken of such smaller matters as we are speaking of.) Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," Rom. xiv. 4, 10. "Let us therefore (as it is afterwards inculcated and urged)

follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another," ver. 19.

2. Rash anger is another positive violation of this law of love; or tumultuous and insolent passions, that suddenly rise and storm and rage in Christian breasts one against another; many times on very small and little provocations, but to that height as no provocation can justify. How little is it considered that our Saviour, in the interpretation which he gives of the law in his sermon on the mount, does so interpret the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," as to make anger against our brother a kind of murder, and to bring it within the compass of that prohibition! Moreover,

3. Which is a great deal worse, inveterate grudges are also inconsistent with that love which we owe to our Christian brother. These strike at the very root of love, and tend to the starving and famishing the principle itself. Thus persons lay up something in their minds against this or that fellow-Christian, and there it shall lie, corrode, work and fret, till it is the occasion of their doing him hurt; but it is much more mischievous to themselves, and turns to their own far greater hurt and damage. "Grudge not one against another," says the apostle, "the Judge is at the door," Jam. v. 9. An intimation that this is a matter that will be brought before the Judge. Here now is work for the Judge when he comes, that such and such have allowed themselves to harbour grudges in their hearts, till they are grown old and turned into rankling and festered sores within.

And certainly to a truly Christian spirit that is itself, and in a right frame, nothing will be more agreeable than to say, "I would not for all this world know or experience any thing as a settled grudge in my heart to any one, who or whatsoever he be; so as to wish that his finger should ache, or that he should have the least harm or hurt upon my account, or for any disaffection he may bear or express to me." This now is a truly Christian spirit. But to allow myself to treasure up such things; to let them remain (*altâ mente reposita*, as it were) against such a man, is very much against this law of love. He has offended you; it may be you are as prone to offend him, or to offend another.

It is little considered what is the true, the proper and right notion of the Christian church, or the churches of Christ in general. They are hospitals, or rather one great hospital, wherein there are persons of all sorts under cure. There is none that is sound, none that is not diseased, none that hath not wounds and sores about him. Now how insufferable insolence were it, that in an hospital of maimed and diseased persons, one sick or wounded man should say; "Such a man's sores are so noisome to me, that I am not able to endure the being neighbour to him?" Is it fit to talk thus in an hospital where all are sick? Cannot sore and wounded men endure one another, when they are all there for cure? Indeed if a person is stark dead, apparently stark dead, it is not fit he should remain there to be an annoyance to the rest. But further,

4. A secret delight taken in the harm of another is yet worse than the former. When those that call themselves Christians, or to whom that name may belong, secretly please themselves to see inconveniencies befall this or that person, this, I say, is a horrid violation of the law of love. It is a most unnatural thing to rejoice in the harm of another. In the body, as the apostle intimates, (1 Cor. xii. 26.) when one member is suffering, all the members suffer with it. And to delight in the harm of others is as contrary to the spiritual nature, which is diffused in the true body of Christ, as if the head or any other member should rejoice that the hand or foot is put to pain. And,

5. Directly opposite to this, but no less inconsistent with this duty of loving our Christian brother, is envy at the good of another. When I behold the good of another with an invidious, displeased eye, because such a man is better than I am; or is better reputed, or reported of; or has better gifts, or parts; or there is more appearance of his grace; and he doth more good, or has more to do good with: these are most insufferable things, most directly contrary to love.

6. Most of all inconsistent with this duty is hatred. This is directly contrary to it, and, in the tendency of it, aims at no less than the destruction of the person himself. And how frequently is the case so even among some Christians, that nothing can satisfy them but the destruction of those who differ from them! Nothing less than their destruction will serve their turn. This is a thing so common and manifest, as if it were quite forgotten that ever there was such a portion of Scripture in the Bible as this, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," 1 John iii. 15. And it is yet worse, when the very reason of that hatred is because such and such persons are better than themselves; as it is with many profane persons that go under the name of Christians, and yet hate Christians all the while for Christianity's sake; for living the Christian life, and observing the precepts of their common Lord: as Cain did his brother Abel, because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. To shut up all,

7. Another positive instance of the violation of this law of love to our Christian brother, (in the last place,) is bearing hardly on one another's consciences in matters of external form relating to religion. I speak this with respect to private persons, for such I suppose my hearers to be. That is, when they do in their own minds wish, or any way within their own compass or capacity endeavour, that the consciences of such who differ from them may be hardly born upon.

It is very true indeed that the pretence of conscience, for apparent flagitious crimes, is a most wicked and blasphemous pretence. For that is to entitle God to my wickedness, or to charge him with it; inasmuch as I cannot allege conscience for any thing, but I must in that case look upon it, and refer to it, as God's substitute and vicegerent, and as doing his part within me. Therefore to pretend conscience for any thing that is in its own nature wicked and flagitious, is to cast all upon God; and to pretend that he hath enjoined me to do such or such a wicked thing. But when the difference is about small matters, which are (as we said before) extra-essential to religion, even by common consent; it is a great violation of love for Christians in this case to affect and desire to have those who dissent from them hardly dealt withal, and their consciences grievously imposed upon on this pretence, that they must be, in such forms and external modes of religious worship, just as themselves, or they are not to be endured.

We do not count it necessary that it should be so as to the natural body. For I look upon matters of external form in the church, as I do upon the external vestments or coverings of our bodies. Now we do not think it necessary, that every member of the natural body should have a covering of the same shape, size, and colour. And if this case were but considered as it should be, and Christian love did but do its part, (abstracting from what necessity there may be by an authoritative sanction,) we should not think it more necessary, that every member in such a Christian community should be clothed in external form alike, than that every part of the body should have the same sort of garment; or, that for conformity's sake, a man should wear a cap on his foot as well as on his head.

Love, if it might be allowed its place and exercise, would consider the necessities of the several members. Love to ourselves, in the natural body, teaches us to do so. Sometimes it may be I have a sore toe or a hurt finger, that will not endure a pinching shoe or a strait glove; yet I do not think it necessary to cut off that finger or toe, or to let it go naked; but I provide a covering for it that it will bear, and that is suitable to it. Certainly, Christian love would lead us to act in like manner to the members of the Christian body, if it had but the place and exercise that belongs to it and which it claims.

Therefore now to conclude, let it be seriously considered by us how happy a world and how happy a church it would make, if we could but learn according to what we have heard, to exercise this love to men as men, and to Christians as Christians. There would then be no contention in the world, or the church, but only a striving who should do the most good, and who should be most good and kind to others.

And it is a vain thing to hope, until the spirit of love revives, ever to see good days. It is no external thing that

will do the business. To be brought under the same form in every punctilio, in every minute circumstance, what would that do? What I say would this do if love be wanting, which is the life and soul of all communities, especially of the Christian community? Without this, the body would hang together but as a rope of sand. Love then alone is the unitive, living cement, that joineth part to part and all to the head. It is this that must make Christianity to flourish, and the Christian church a lovely and a living thing; a thing full of loveliness, life, and vigour. And happy will it be when hearts are knit together in love, and all aim at the edification of one another, and also at the good of the whole; bearing with one another in tolerable things, and labouring to redress what is intolerable and not to be borne. Therefore as we are to direct our prayers this way, so let us direct our practice also amongst ourselves, and all those with whom we converse. And so I have done with this Scripture.

THIRTEEN SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

SERMON I.*

AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW THE TIMES OR THE SEASONS, WHICH THE FATHER HATH PUT IN HIS OWN POWER. ACTS i. 7.

THESE words are part of our Saviour's reply unto an impertinent question that was put to him by his disciples, after he had some time conversed with them since his resurrection, and immediately before he ascended, and went up into glory from them. They inquire of him, saying in the 6th verse, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answers, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." And then it follows, "when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."

It is obvious to the observation of any that read the evangelical history, what it was that the minds, even of Christ's more immediate followers, were intent upon, during the time of his abode in the flesh among them; and great was the expectation they had of a time when the Roman yoke should be shaken off, and when Israel, that had now been tributary long to that power, should be restored to its liberty. And when they had found that they had now got among them one that manifestly appeared to be an extraordinary person, who could heal the sick, raise the dead, and do all other wonders with a word, they little doubted but now was the time of this great turn and revolution which they so much hoped for. He that could feed multitudes as with miracles, they doubted not could easily maintain an army strong enough to do the business, upon very easy and unexpensive terms.

But see at length now what this great expectation of theirs came to! Which expectation, you must know too, had a private aspect even towards themselves, and their own concernments; for they doubted not if their Head and Lord became so great, they that were immediately related to him, must share proportionably in his greatness; and some of them, as the Gospel tells you, thought of nothing less than sitting at his right hand and left hand, in this his temporal kingdom which they thought he was about to set up. But see, I say, what this expectation came to! Him, whom they expected to be a potent glorious king, they had seen apprehended and haled to judgment, and to death, as a most ignominious malefactor. They had beheld the end of him, and seen him expire, and die upon a bloody reproachful cross; and now all these great hopes of theirs were vanished. "We trusted," say they, "that this was he that should have redeemed Israel." Great hopes we had, that the so long expected work would now, without any possibility of frustration or disappointment, have received its accomplishment and be brought to a glorious period. But they saw their hope laid in the dust; and now they reckon there was nothing more to be looked for from him; there was an end of him, and all their expectations from him. We hoped this was he; but we are fain now to think we know not what, or to think other thoughts of him.

Well, but at length he revives, and rises again; and now their hopes revive, and rise too. But their hopes are still of the same carnal and low alloy; still their minds run the same way they had done, and they take up the matter afresh where they had left it. "Come, Lord, what sayest thou now to this great business? Wilt thou now at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Now that thou hast conquered this same death that hath befallen thee, what canst thou not conquer? Shall the business be yet done?" See what he tells them in this reply of his; "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." What kindness (as if he had said) God hath for Israel, in that respect you intimate, it belongs not to you to know; it becomes you not to inquire. In the mean time there is another work for you to do. "You shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, &c. He answers them first with a rebuke, and then with a promise. With a rebuke of that curiosity and carnality, which they betrayed in their question. As if he had said, "You meddle with things that concern you not; you too busily pry, and with an eye too daring and adventurous, into matters which God hath purposed to reserve and hide from you." But unto this mild rebuke he adds also a gracious promise. "There is a work for you to do that is properly yours, and which you have been designed to, and you shall be fitted and qualified for it; and pray let that content you, and serve your turn. Your work and business must be to be witness-bearers to me, to my name and truth; to be my agents to carry on the business and design of that spiritual kingdom, which I am intent to establish, and promote, and spread through the whole world. And in order thereunto, you shall have a power come upon you which you shall little understand till you feel it, and which shall furnish you for this great work. You shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

You see then the occasion and drift of the words, which I have designed at present to speak to; and these two things (that we may not lose more time in any thing previous) we may observe from them,

FIRST, That there are times and seasons respecting the church of God in the world, which the Father doth reserve and conceal in his own hand and power from men. And,

SECONDLY, That they are not concerned to be solicitous

* Preached at Mr. Case's, March 3rd, 1675.

or make inquiry touching those times and seasons, but are to be patient of ignorance in reference thereunto. These I shall briefly open, and assert severally; and then apply them jointly together.

FIRST, That there are such times and seasons, that have reference to the state of the church of God upon earth, which the Father doth reserve and hide from men, in his own power. Now here concerning this we are to inquire, what these times and seasons are; and then what the hiding of them in God's own power doth import, which will serve for the explication of this truth. And then we shall let you see upon what accounts the blessed God is thus reserved towards men in this matter, hiding the events of such times and seasons in his own hand and power; and therein you may have some account of the reasons of what is asserted in this point.

As to the explication of it, two things are to be spoken to, namely, I. What these times and seasons are; and, II. What the hiding of them in God's hand and power is, or the putting them there, as it is here expressed. As to the former:

I. The times and seasons which he doth so hide, we may say concerning them that he doth conceal, first, the final and concluding season of time, the period and upshot of time; and then, of each man's own particular time. He hides,

1. The period of all time from men. We know not when the season shall be, that shall shut up time. It is a thing determined, that there shall be such a season, beyond which time shall be no more. As that great angel is brought in swearing by him that liveth for ever and ever, "that there should be time no longer," Rev. x. 6. But we are elsewhere told, that "of that day knoweth no man, no, not the Son," (as man we must understand it,) "but the Father," Matt. xxiv. 36. And,

2. The period of our own times also he hides, and keeps in reserve, as a thing put in his own power, and not into ours. "No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, nor hath he power in death; and there is no discharge in that war," Eccles. viii. 8. The measure of our own days he hath not put in our power. If any would hold the spirit in that day, or detain the soul in the body in which they live, they cannot do it. No man hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; he must resign it when God commands it away; and that time is a thing he hath kept in his own power. You have that expression of Isaac remarkable to this purpose; "I am old, and know not the day of my death," Gen. xxvii. 2. Though he was grown a very old man, and very near to death, yet he could not know the time; though it was so very near that he might be sure it could not be very far off, yet he professeth ignorance concerning the time still. "My times are in thy hand," (Psalm xxxi. 15.) saith David. And into his hands he commits his spirit, as you have it in the fifth verse of the same psalm. That life which he knew he could not command, he very willingly commits; he is well pleased that the measuring of it should be in the hands wherein it was. As if he had said, "I desire not to have it in mine own hand; I commit my spirit into thy hand; let it lodge here in this tabernacle as long as thou wilt, and let it go forth when thou wilt; this power is better lodged in thy hands than mine." Moreover,

There are contained within this compass of time in general, or of our own time, the seasons of good or evil unto the church in general, and the especial members of it in particular; which are for the most part unknown, and reserved in the hand and power of God.

The good seasons seem to be more especially referred to here; for it was a certain good to the church of God that the apostles were inquisitive about. "It is not for you to know the times." God hath his set time, an appointed time, wherein to favour Zion, that may seem instant and at hand now and then; as they speak in the 102nd Psalm, (we may well suppose as they would have it,) The time to favour Zion, yea the set time, is come, Ps. cii. 13. Methinks it should be come; why should not the full time be accomplished? If one may make an estimate from the affections of the well-wishers of Zion, it should be come. "Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." But this could not be peremptorily said; he had stated the time of it with himself; the appointment of it was a matter in his own hand and power. And by consequence,

The ill times, the more afflictive times, of the people of God are hid, and put in his own hand and power too. For supposing that a good season be determined by him, a calm, and more serene or halcyon season, it must be by consequence in his hand and power too to measure all the intervals: how long the intervening ill seasons shall last, how long it shall be that his people shall feed upon the bread of affliction, and have their own tears for drink, and have men riding over their heads, and they be themselves even as the street to them that pass over. All that time must come under the same mensuration, the mensuration of the same hand. So that to determine when the church of God shall enjoy better days, and how long worse times shall last, this they were to account and reckon upon, that he had put it into his own hand and power. It is that which we have an interdict upon us to know. "It concerns not you to know, trouble not yourselves to inquire, the matter is in good hands." But then we are to consider too,

II. What its being in the power of God and being put there doth signify; which last we are to consider chiefly as leading to the other. The force and emphasis of the expression, seems to set forth more, than that it should barely import they are in his power; the phrase signifieth withal a positive act that is put forth in reference to their being so; that is, an act of the Divine will which hath determined with itself that it will have the matter so, that such times and seasons shall remain in his own hand and power. As for those expressions in Scripture, (hand and power,) they explain one another. The hand of God is nothing else but his power; his active power, by which he ruleth the world, and changeth times and seasons, as to him seemeth good. But if you inquire for a more distinct explication of this matter, how this power and hand of God exerts itself, in reference to such times and seasons? Why, it doth so, 1. In reference to the existence of them, 2. To the discovery of them.

1. In reference to their existence: his power doth effect, and bring it to pass, that there should be such times and seasons, as he hath stated and determined with himself. And so more particularly his power orders or effects such things as these, in reference to the existence of the times and seasons. As,

(1.) The commencement of them: that is, when such a state of things, good or evil, shall take its beginning; when such a cloud shall first begin to arise and spread itself over the horizon; when it shall scatter and be dispersed, and a bright and cheerful light spring up; "the day-spring from on high" to visit the desolate. This, his hand or power hath determined. And then,

(2.) How long such or such a state of things shall continue. The duration of it, its bounds and limits, are the work of his hand and power. So long my people shall be afflicted; as he did determine concerning the people of Israel, from the time that he spake to Abraham about that matter, namely, four hundred and thirty years; and then ensued that blessed peaceful calm, and the glorious and wonderful works of Providence, which did make way for that and introduce it, whereof the history afterwards gives an account. And again,

(3.) His own hand or power exactly measures all the degrees of good and evil, that shall be within such a compass of time, so as that there shall be nothing, more or less, than what his power orders. For we are not to take times and seasons here abstractedly; but so as to take in the events of such times and seasons; all those events which such times and seasons go pregnant with. All the births of those times, of what kind soever they be; his power orders every one so to come forth, even as it doth comes forth. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will, Dan. iv. 35. And,

(4.) That hand or power doth order all the occasions and methods by which such and such seasons, with all that they are laden and burdened with, shall be brought about. Nothing comes to pass but as that hand or power doth direct and order: not only the effects, the things that are produced; but all their causes, or whatsoever is productive of them. And we may add.

(5.) That the hand or power of God doth also order all the consequences and dependencies, of any such times and seasons. For there is still a concatenation in providences; and nothing falls out in the world but somewhat else depends upon it: this and that is done which is preparatory, and leads the way to something else that is to be done, till the end and the folding up of all things; till that season come, when it is determined, that time shall be no more. But,

2. This hand or power of the Father hath its exercise not only in reference to the existence, but also to the discovery and notification, of those times and seasons which he hath reserved in his own power. That is, either to make them known beforehand or not, as he pleaseth; or else to make them known more or less clearly as he pleaseth, with greater or less degrees of obscurity or perspicuity, according as seems to him good. This is that he hath in his own hand and power, either to reveal or not to reveal them, what seasons shall be as seemeth him good; or if he let any light break out beforehand into the heads or hearts of those that are in covenant with him, then to let out so much and no more as seemeth him good.

And this may suffice for the explication of the first point. And would you now have some reason of it, why he doth thus put future times and seasons in his own power, and keep them there; why it is always his will and pleasure, while such things remain hid and reserved, that it should be so; the reasons will partly respect him, partly ourselves.

I. Respecting him there is a great reason for it on his part; that is, this twofold reason;—1. It is his right,—2. It is his glory.

1. It is his right to have futurity thus in his own hand and power, it belongs to him as he is Ruler of the world, the great Disposer and Orderer of all things. For is it not inconsistent with sovereignty, to be accountable for every thing one means to do? should there be no *arcana imperii, nothing kept hid and secret?* It cannot stand with the absoluteness, at least, of his dominion, and that power which rightfully belongs to him over the whole creation, that there should be nothing determined or done, but there must be previous notice of it given to his creatures. He gives no account of any of his matters unto any. And then,

2. It is his glory, and his honour; it is the peculiar honour of his Godhead, to have the prospect of all his works in view, even from the beginning to the end. A glory that he cannot share nor communicate. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, to hide things, to have his way in the dark, so as that his footsteps shall not be known; and so to steer the course, and manage the whole administration of his government, that none shall be able to trace him, or know what he will do next; neither make any certain collection from what is done, what shall be done. As the wise man says, "He hath made every thing beautiful in its time," (hath ordered all things in the aptest and fittest seasons for the same,) "also he hath set the world in their hearts, so that no man can find the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end," Eccles. iii. 11. He hath set the world in their hearts, so as that the very world itself, that is, the stage on which are acted so many successive parts, doth become a blind to them, that they cannot see his way; nor from the beginning or former things conjecture, or make any collection what will ensue. As, you know, the eye that sees all things, sees not itself. He hath set the world in their heart, the seat of prudence, understanding, wisdom, and knowledge; but the object is so close to the faculty that it cannot see. They cannot see what is done in the world so near them, so as to be able to discern and make inferences from any former things, to any future things yet to be done, at least wise as to the timing of them, which our text referreth chiefly to. "Such a thing was done such a time, therefore such a thing will be done such a time."

This then is his peculiar and singular glory, that he can outdo apprehension, and counterwork the conjectures and guesses even of all men. Sometimes such a state of things, according to all visible human appearances, seems instant; it may be nothing but gloominess, darkness, and horror is to be looked for at such a time, according to all the prognostics we can have; and lo! by a quick turn of providence, most unexpectedly a bright lightsome season is brought forth in view. Sometimes, on the other hand, external appearances are fair and pleasing; men are ready to cry nothing but Peace, peace; and then a sudden cloud arises, and spreads itself over all, out of which nothing but storms and tempests ensue. And so doth the providence of God, as was aptly expressed by the poet, seem to sport with men; *ludere in humanis rebus.* God doth, as it were, glory over men in this kind, by giving them to see, how by letting such appearances come into view he can raise fears and scatter them; or excite such and such probabilities to make persons full of hopes, and presently dash them, that men may know the Lord omnipotent reigneth. There is no searching his understanding; he is not capable of being prescribed unto. None can direct the Spirit of the Lord; it runs the most unthought-of ways in its disposal and management of things. This then is reason enough as to God; it is his right to have the disposal of times and seasons; and then it is his glory wherein his excellency doth shine and discover itself, and shows how far he transcends all the thoughts and apprehensions of men; how far his thoughts are above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways. And,

II. There is reason too, in reference to his people, why it should be so; that is, it is their great advantage that thus it should be. As,

1. That they may not be diverted from their proper work and business, the work they have to do from day to day, and from hour to hour; which certainly they would be, if they had the range of all future times open to them. They would be taken off from minding their present business; and spend their time in continual profitless ranges, to and fro, in the futurities that should lie open, and present a vast prospect to them. And again,

2. That they may not be disquieted; for certainly it would be a very great disquietment to the mind of a good man, if he did know all things that should fall out in the compass of time, even his own time. But I hasten to the other thing, and therefore enlarge not further here.

SECONDLY, The second point was this; We are not concerned, and therefore should not be solicitous to inquire, or know much of these reserved times and seasons, which he hath so put and hid in his own hand and power; "It is not for you to know the times," &c. And here we may reckon it is not for us,

I. As being none of our right, it belongs not unto us; we can claim no such thing. And,

II. As being no way for our advantage. It can profit us nothing. What should we get by it? It is therefore not for us. God hath so disposed the state of things, and the way of his dispensation towards us men, over whom he is Governor, as not to please and gratify our humour; but to do, in reference to his own, what may make for their real advantage. But what shall we be the better for knowing what God will do, what times or seasons shall come either of good or evil? I add further,

III. It would be our great disadvantage, and a prejudice to us. For,

1. It would multiply our troubles. For do not we know how apt we are to forecast troubles to ourselves? When we are not sure they will come, yet our minds will not be withheld from a most tormenting anticipation of evil, and possible troubles; (we do not know they are certainly future, but we apprehend them possible;) and so that which God would have us suffer but once, we suffer a thousand times. We ought to admire here the Divine wisdom and mercy in conjunction, upon this occasion; that he doth not let us have any more knowledge than what will suit with our power in such things. What a dreadful concurrence would it be in us between infinite knowledge and finite power! Could we know all things, and yet do but this or that; if a man should have the knowledge of such and such things to come, but no power to prevent it; (as alas! what can our impotency do?) how dreadful, I say, would this be!

There is a great deal of compassion in this; that since it belongs to our state as creatures to be able to do but little, to be mere dependencies, impotent things, that therefore we should not have foreknowledge of what it would

be afflictive to us to foreknow. We are therefore put under a restriction that comes so close to us, as to stand betwixt us and to-morrow. "Take no thought for the morrow; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," Matt. vi. 34. We are not to range with afflicting thoughts so far as to the next day. Thou wilt have enough in this day to trouble thee with, never let thy solicitude be conversant about the accessions of time. We foolish creatures should fetch the troubles of all our days into every day, if we could foreknow what is to come. Take then no thought for to-morrow; it is enough for you that you have One to think of you, and care for you. And it will make most for your advantage to be looked upon by him every day; who will make your strength to be sufficient for each day when it comes. And then,

2. As it would be a prejudice to us in the multiplication of afflictions, so in the diminution of mercies. For there is a great accent of pleasure and delightfulness certainly added to them by the surprisingness of them, when they come most unexpectedly. How grateful is a bright, warm, refreshing sun, shining all on a sudden out of a thick dismal cloud! Memorable things have been done for the church of God that they looked not for; such things as eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had it entered into their hearts to conceive, or which they could form no conception of beforehand. "Who would have looked (said they) for such a day as this is?" How sweet is a mercy that comes unknown, unlooked for! "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing," Ps. cxxvi. 1, 2. God so provides in this matter, that nothing of the gust and sweetness of mercy shall be lost to his people; they shall have it with the best and highest set-off or advantage. Now,

To make some brief use of all that we have observed, taken together; we may learn hence,

1. That there is an aptness in the spirits of men, even of good men, to be very inquisitively prying into futurity, beyond what God hath thought fit to reveal and put out of his own hand and power, as to the discovery thereof. "Lord, wilt thou" (say his disciples) "at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" wilt thou do it now? It would not, it seems, satisfy them or serve their turn, to have some understanding, such as they might collect from the prophets, whom they had in their hands, that God had a kind thought towards Israel, had not utterly cast off his people: they cannot be content to know only so much; but, Lord! shall it be now? Wilt thou now restore the kingdom to Israel?

That disposition of spirit, since it is so natural, ought to be watched and repressed; and as we find any hankering in our own spirits this way, we should see to it that they meet with their seasonable and due rebukes, even from our own animadversions. We are, when a suffering time is upon us, very impatiently set upon it to know when it shall be over. If we have any expectation of a good time, oh! but when shall it be? Thus we would bring God to our punctilio, and to our very *now*. Upon such niceties would we be with him, so apt are we to dodge with the great Lord of heaven and earth. "That which I would have, shall it be now? or when shall it be? This is that I would be rid or freed of, but when? How long must I bear? how long must I wait?" This now is undutiful, and stands not with that creaturely submission, that is belonging and proper to our state: much less with the spirit of a child; that tractableness, resignation, yielding in all things to the Father's pleasure and wisdom, which is most agreeable to that relation. And again,

II. We may learn hence, that times or seasons, whether they be good or evil to a people, fall not out to them casually, or by chance; but they remain in the hand and power of God. We are too apt to let our spirits work many times as if we thought such and such things came to pass by casualty. For if any ill state of things come upon us, how apt are we to aggravate the evil of it to ourselves, saying; "'Had it not been for such a thing, this had not come; this might have been kept off; if it had not been for the miscarriage of this instrument, our case had not been so bad. If it were not for this or that unhappy accident, all had been well enough." Alas! we forget, these things are in his hand and power that overrules and orders all, that it is not blind chance that regulates the world, but the counsel and wisdom of God that run through the compass of all events, and hath the conduct of all things.

III. We may also learn, that men have it not in their hand and power to order times and seasons of good and evil, to God's people, as they please. We may sometimes seem to have that apprehension ourselves; and if we have not, some may have an apprehension, that it is in their hand and power to dispose and measure out good and evil, to the children of God, as they will. No, God hath not let the reins go yet, he hath the times and seasons in his own power. Say they sometimes, "We will pursue, we will overtake, and we will divide the spoil, we shall have our will over them," when God hath not said so: and his will and work shall stand against and above theirs. And take we heed of our attributing too much to creatures, that what men have a mind to, shall be; or what they have no mind to, shall not be. There is a God in heaven that changeth the times and seasons as he seeth good. And, for the shutting up of all, let us in reference to this matter, and upon what hath been spoken to you, take in the close these few counsels.

1. Let us labour to trust in him, who hath all the times and seasons which concern us, and his people, and the world, in his own hand and power. Have we not reason enough to do so, and encouragement enough? And so though we be blind and cannot see the product of to-morrow; know not what a day will bring forth; we shall have him to be eyes to us. He will be eyes to the blind, if they will but trust in him. As when a blind person is led by another, he useth that person's eyes who leads him. Let him lead us on from day to day, time to time, season to season. We cannot see with our own eyes, but is it not better for us that we have better eyes to see with? For we have one to see for us, who seeth infinitely better than we. We know not the product of the next day, or week; but is it not enough that he knoweth the event of all future times, and that he orders all things with exact judgment? "He is a Rock, his work is perfect, all his ways are judgment," (Deut. xxxii. 4.) or reason: the most exquisite reason, that is, the result of deliberation, and the most concocted thoughts. Deliberation, it is true, can have no place with him, who is the most absolutely perfect Being; but that which is equivalent is intended to be signified by the applying it to him. He sees with one view all the connexions of things; and so is able to outdo them who reason but by degrees, and by recollecting of things after things, so as to make a judgment at last. "Our God is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. xxx. 18. To every thing there is time and judgment. He doth particularly state the time and season, applieth to every thing its proper time when it is most fit it should fall out; and then it will so do to the best purpose. Trust in him, I say, who hath all future times and seasons in his own hand and power. The Father hath put them all in his own hand and power. Father! that is an expression of love, tenderness, compassion, and care. Is he not fit to be trusted then?

2. Submit to him, who hath all things and seasons in his power; resign, I say, and yield the matter to him. Subdue an unquiet, turbulent heart; beat down all wayward and perverse reasonings. Father is a name of authority, as well as love. The Father hath put all things in his hand and power; he who is the Head of the family, that great family, which is made up of heaven and earth. And are you children of that family, and will you not allow that he orders the timing of things as to him seemeth meet.

3. Since you cannot know his times and seasons, pray labour to know your own. Since you cannot know the times and seasons which he hath put in his own hand and power, know those that he hath appointed to you. Though he hath hid from you those seasons of future events, in the contingencies of the world, yet he hath not hid from you the duty of all seasons and events. This is our time. "Your time is alway ready," saith Christ; (John vii. 6.) that is, the present time is ours, that he hath put as a prize

into our hands; the present time for present work, if we have wisdom and hearts to make use of it.

It is a dreadful thing not to know our own time. "For man," says the preacher, "also knoweth not his time," Eccles. ix. 12. That was the miserable state of Jerusalem; they knew not the time of their visitation. For our Saviour beheld the city, and wept over it, considering what was coming upon it. Enemies should begirt it round about, such and such ruins should befall it, and all because they did not know in their day the things that did belong to their peace; but now they were hid from their eyes, Luke xix. 41, 42. Thou hadst a good time, as if he had said, if thou wouldst have known it. We are barred up as to future time; but we are bid to know the present time, and what God calls for at our hands therein. We may know when it is a time to mourn, and when to rejoice; when to weep, and when to be merry and pleasant.

He points out to us our more extraordinary praying seasons, if we would but observe the finger of Providence, and take notice of his indications. It is a lamentable case, when we cannot understand the time of such a thing; when we cannot know this is a time for such work, and this for such work. The present time points out such and such work that we should be intent upon. We cannot indeed know these reserved times and seasons; let us then know the times that are left open to our view. As now this present time is come, but do we know what ought to be the work of this time? God hath ordered for us this time, this season to be waiting for him, humbling ourselves before him. The season tells us what the working of our souls should be now at this time; what there should be of humiliation; what of striving and wrestling with God; what endeavours to take hold of him, that we may yet keep him with us, while we have him. It is a happy thing to be able to know a praying day, when it comes; to know it so as to answer it by a suitable frame and temper of spirit.

So also you are expecting shortly another good time, a season of drawing nigh unto God, and to converse with him and with your great Redeemer, even at his own table. If God do order for you that season, that will tell you what disposition of spirit there must be; and you ought to be forecasting, that you may have a temper and disposition of spirit suitable to such a season, and the work of it. If you have the season, it will then prove a blessed season; and if you should be deprived of it, yet all these sweet gracious workings of spirit will not be lost, they will be a rich advantage to you even in reference to a future holy course. Oh then, if you cannot know God's time, labour to know your own? the present time for present work, that he seems to call you to. And then I add in the

4. And last place, since you cannot look far into future time, look more into eternity, over and beyond all time. For it is only future time that God hath shut up from you; while he leaves eternity open to you. He would have you look over time into a vast and boundless eternity. Look then not to the things that are seen and temporal, (things measured by time,) but to the things unseen and eternal! And doing so, this will be your great advantage and gain; you will find that though the outward man should perish, (as there will come a crash upon all our earthly tabernacles, and down they must,) the inward man will be renewed day by day. If, then, the outward man will perish, let it perish; if it will go down, let it go; there is somewhat we shall gain by that loss. In the mean while we shall in our souls be renewing strength day by day, if we keep our eye open to eternity; to that unseen state of things within the vail, whither he hath led the way, who is our great Forerunner to the glory that is to be revealed; with which glory the sufferings of the present time, this *now*, are not to be compared; not to be named in the same day, with that felicity which accrues to us hereafter. In a word, what we now suffer, within the compass of time, cannot bear any parallel with that glory and blessedness which is to come after time is done. Let us therefore in the mean while seriously mind these things.

* Preached at Haberdasher's Hall, February 27th, 1678.

SERMON II.*

2 Cor. iv. 8.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.

I SHALL detain you very little about the context. In the foregoing verse the apostle speaks of a certain treasure which was committed to earthen vessels, with this design, that the excellency of the power might be of God; that is, might appear to be of God, and not of men. What this treasure was you may collect from the 6th verse. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Now "this treasure," saith he, "we have in earthen vessels;" that is, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ: conveyed in and through a Mediator, and discovered in the Gospel. It is a treasure of light whereof he speaks, a treasure of glorious light. And this is that which he said was put into earthen vessels; intrusted to the ministerial disposition of very mean, and very weak and fragile instruments. And that upon this account, that all might see that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of them; that there was somewhat more than human in the matter, that such effects, as he had spoken of in the close of the foregoing chapter, should follow that dispensation they were intrusted with. Where also it is by the way intimated, that this same treasure is not a treasure of mere light; feeble, ineffectual notions, that were apt only to reach the mind of a man, and stay there as the matter of contemplation only; but it is a certain vital, vigorous light, whereof he speaks, a light that carries power, efficacy, and a transforming influence along with it. The light of that glory which, being beheld, changeth souls into the same likeness, from glory to glory. This light we have, this treasure of glorious light, in earthen vessels; that so the excellency of that power, which accompanieth this light, may appear to be of God, and not of men: that all who observe it may be convinced, and constrained to confess something divine in it, when such things are discovered and held forth to men, as work at the rate, which the Gospel dispensation was designed to do, and did actually do.

And then in the words that we are to speak unto, and those that follow, he giveth a proof and demonstration of the excellency of the power, that did accompany and go with the Gospel light wherever it reached its end, and did the work to which it was designed; and to which it was also in its own nature adapted and made suitable. Let this be a proof to you (as if he had said) that there is a certain excellency of power accompanying that light, which we are appointed to convey to the world; namely, that we, who are thus intrusted, though we are but a company of earthen vessels, are not for all that presently knocked asunder, by being on every side struck at and dashed against. "We are, indeed, troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." Certainly there was somewhat more than ordinary in this matter, that a little light should so preserve vessels of earth, that they could not be broken. There was an excellency of power went along with it. And this is brought for a proof of it, that their spirits were sustained and upheld in defiance of surrounding troubles. Our spirits are not broken, we are still where we were, whatever assaults are made upon us from without. This is that which the apostle says here, and is manifestly the design and scope of the words.

And in these and the following words we have the apostle very curiously criticising about the degree of the afflictions, which he, and others in his circumstances, were exposed to, or the extent and limits of them; that they reached so far, to a certain point or degree, but no further. And he makes, as you see, a fourfold distinction between trouble on every side, and distress; perplexity, and despair; persecution, and desertion; dejection, and destruc-

tion: yielding the former as to each of these, but denying the latter.

And as to this passage which we have chosen to speak unto, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed:" we are to consider the subject, that is common to this, and all the rest; and then what is said about it by way of affirmation, and by way of negation.

It is very true, the apostle doth more directly speak here of a particular subject; that is, of such persons as were intrusted with the ministry and dispensation of the gospel: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, we are troubled on every side," &c. But yet the same persons were considerable too in a capacity, that was common to them with all other Christians. And he speaks in that guise before, of something that must be understood as common to Christians in general; and not appropriated to ministers only: and that is, the having the light to shine into their hearts; that "light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." This was not peculiar unto them alone. It having shone first into the minds and hearts of the apostles; from thence, as its instrument, this light was further conveyed, and transmitted unto others. We take "we" therefore in that more exclusive sense, or as it holds forth to us a larger subject; namely, Christians as such, who are so in sincerity and truth; and I would observe to you,

That it is very possible to be encompassed with surrounding troubles, and yet at the same time not to be in distress. Or, if we take it with application to the subject; sincere Christians, even then, when they are surrounded with troubles on every side, may yet be exempted from distress; may be troubled on every side, yet not distressed. And that this may be more distinctly spoken to, we are to consider,

First. Of whom this is said.

Secondly, What it is that is said of them. And,

Thirdly, Upon what grounds.

First, We are to consider of whom this is said. I have already in general told you, that we may justly extend it to all Christians that are sincere; that is, who are entirely such, and who faithfully persevere.

I. To those, who are entirely such, or are Christians throughout: who do not content themselves with this or that piece of religion; but have gotten the whole and entire frame of it. It is very possible, that the whole of religion may not, by these troubles on every side, be struck at all at once. But if a man be an entire Christian, by the concurrence of all the integral parts which belong to such a character, it is likely that he will some time or other find himself troubled on every side; and yet may find himself also exempted from distress. The apostle tells us, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12. It was possible to be a sober man, and a pious man, (as piety went in the pagan world,) and yet not be persecuted. But if a man would be a godly man in Jesus Christ; if he would add Christianity, in that state of things, and at that time, to his profession of piety; then, as if the apostle had said, let him look to it, he will be persecuted; and then he had need to look to this also, that he be not distressed.

II. The true Christian of whom we speak is also one that faithfully perseveres. Having been once an entire Christian, by the concurrence of all that was requisite to make him so, he continues to be what once he was. Otherwise, by laying aside this or that piece of religion, when that comes to expose him to danger, the case would be altered. He neither would be exposed to affliction, nor so much need the support. If I did preach circumcision, says the apostle, when the doing of that was so great a salvo to a man, why should I then suffer persecution? I should then be liable to no trouble, the offence of the cross being ceased, Gal. v. 11. "It were" (as if he had said) "an easy matter for me to avoid the stroke, if I could waive such a particular piece of Christian truth, and such a part of Christian duty; as this very juncture of time did challenge my owning and asserting even to the utmost hazard. I were well enough if I could dispense in this matter: but because I cannot, the offence of the cross is not likely to cease; I shall have that in my way if I were apt to stumble at it."

Secondly, We are next to consider what it is that is here said of these persons. Something is said affirmatively, to show the extent of the present affliction; and something negatively, to show the limitation of it.

I. That which is said by way of affirmation, and to show how far the present affliction did extend, is this; "We are troubled on every side." It reached so far as to give trouble on every side. Here we are to consider what sort of trouble that is, in respect of the nature of it; then in respect of the degree of it.

1. In respect of the nature of it, it is plain it was external trouble. The very word there used, θλιβόμενοι, signifieth dashing a thing from without. As the beating and allision of the waves against a rock make no trouble in the rock, no commotion there; but a great deal of noise, clamour, and tumult, round about it. That is the sort of trouble which that word in its primary signification holds forth to us; and which the circumstances of the text declare to be the signification of the thing here meant. And then we have next to consider,

2. The degree of this same trouble; or what is intimated concerning it in the expression "on every side." It is very true indeed we are not necessitated, by the literal import of the expression there used, (παντι,) to read it thus. We may as well read it, troubled in all things, troubled in all kinds, or at all times. The universal expression is capable of any of these additions, whereof there is none expressed in the text. It may therefore mean a great variety of those external troubles that we are liable to: such as we find the apostle making a distinct enumeration of pretty frequently; as in the 2 Cor. xi. 22. and onward, and so elsewhere. And also the expression may import the continuedness of such troubles running along with us in our course. We are always troubled, surrounded with trouble, always filled with it. "In every city, bonds and afflictions abide me," says St. Paul, Acts xx. 23. This is said by way of affirmation, to show the extent of this affliction. And then,

II. By way of negation, to show the limitations of this affliction, it is said that it did not arrive to distress. That is the thing denied of this subject. While trouble on every side is confessed, the apostle, I say, denies their being actually distressed on this account. And there the word used (στενοχωρούμενοι) signifieth such a kind of straitening as doth infer a difficulty of drawing breath: that a man is so compressed that he cannot tell how to breathe; that is the native import of the word. As if he had said, We are not reduced to that extremity, by all the troubles that surround us; but we can breathe well enough for all that. Properly there are meant, by this thing denied, two degrees or steps of inward trouble. As,

1. That it is trouble that doth not reach the heart. For that is a distressing trouble which does so, which cuts and wounds the heart. But it does not touch there, as is the import of that expression in the 32nd Psalm, "In the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him," Psal. xxxii. 6. That is strange that floods of waters should not come nigh unto him, when he is in the midst of them. No, they do not so invade his spirit as to affect that, they do not afflict his heart. And,

2. Here is denied (supposing such afflictions do reach the heart) that they so overwhelm as to constrain them to acknowledge, that they are distressed. If the waters should so flow in upon a man's soul that he could not breathe, that were a distress indeed. But the matter is not so. Either it is a trouble that reacheth not the heart; or if it doth, it does not oppress or overwhelm it. But now,

Thirdly. We are to inquire concerning the grounds of this affirmation and negation; or how it comes to pass that such are troubled on every side, and yet not distressed.

I. Let us inquire how it comes to pass, that true, sincere Christians, are troubled on every side; to keep to the expression in our translation. It is to be observed, that besides the permissive and disposing providence of the great Ruler of the church and the world, who for wise and holy ends permits and orders such a state of things sometimes; besides this, I say, there are those proper inclinations in the persons immediately concerned, which directly

reach the case. That is, there is somewhat in the disposition or temper of those, who are agents in this matter, or immediately work this surrounding trouble; and also in the patients, by which they are exposed, or do expose themselves, to trouble on every side.

As to the former, there needs no other account be given of it, but only the hate, the malignity of a wicked heart; that will be as mischievous to any more visible appearances of God, and his interest, as is possible. Therefore wicked men will create trouble on every side, because they are so wickedly bent.

But then on the part of the patients, or suffering Christians, why are they so exposed? or why do they expose themselves, since the trouble that is on every side, upon the account of religion, might be avoided? To this we answer, that as the reason why others will create this trouble is from the corrupt malignity of their natures, so the reason why these do expose themselves to such trouble is from that new nature, that holy gracious nature, which is put into them, and superadded to what they naturally were before. We are to consider their religion as a thing, which is vitally united with them; that is, as it were, incorporated, and wrought into them, so as to make another sort of person in them from what there was before. For what a difference is there between the religion of one, who is not thorough, and in good earnest, in the business of Christianity, and one who is a Christian indeed! To the former sort, religion is but as a sort of cloak. A man can easily lay aside his cloak if he finds it inconvenient, or a burden to him. It has no living union with himself; therefore it puts him to no pain or trouble at all to throw it away, if he finds thereby any inconvenience. But the religion of one that is truly and sincerely a Christian, is a vital thing, and part of himself. And though a man can easily part with his cloak, yet he cannot so easily part with his skin. That has a vital union with himself to which the spirit of life gives an animating power. And this is the case here. One that is only an overly outside professor hath put on a cloak of Christianity. If he finds that any prejudice is like to accrue to him upon this account, it is, I say, the easiest thing in the world for him to throw off his cloak. But one, who is a Christian indeed, cannot do so. He cannot part with his religion. It is not as a cloak to him, but it is a piece of himself, and therefore he must be exposed. What will directly strike at such a man as he is, cannot be helped; for he cannot cease to be what he is. It is his very nature: that is, a new nature is put into him, which he cannot alter, or change and vary as he will; and therefore he must take what comes. But then again,

II. We are to consider the ground of the negation; why such, though troubled on every side, are not distressed. And they are not so, partly upon the account of that gracious presence that is afforded to them; and partly because of those principles which are in them, that necessarily carry matter of solace and relief, so as to keep them from distress, notwithstanding their being surrounded with external troubles. There is, I say,

1. A gracious presence afforded upon promise. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee," Isa. xliii. 2. This is promised and made good, more or less, in a higher or lower degree, as to the Divine wisdom and goodness seems most meet. He will never leave nor forsake such, whose hearts he hath determined to himself, and who adhere and cleave to him. He will not cast away the upright man. Such a one then is not like to be in distress when he hath God so present to him. It is but turning himself to him, and he hath him at hand. And,

2. In subordination to the former, the very native tendency of the principles, which God has implanted in a holy soul, and which incline and dispose it towards him, are its great relief against every thing that tends to distress, or works that way. As for instance, faith, which adjoins the soul to God, interests it in his infinite fulness; when the soul must be far remote from straits of distress. Love, too, is another principle by which the soul comes to have the actual fruition of that fulness, according to its measure; and what God doth now see meet, or fit, and suitable for it. There is patience also, by which the soul is composed, and brought into a perfect mastery and dominion over itself, so far as this gracious principle obtains. "By your patience possess ye your souls," Luke xxi. 19. You are outed of yourselves, if you be not patient; but if you be patient you enjoy yourselves. So that let the storm be never so great and boisterous without, there will be peace and calmness within. Patience is an ability to suffer. It is passive fortitude. He that can suffer, who is furnished with this ability, is in peace and quiet; is in no distress. He considers the case thus: "Such and such can afflict, and I can suffer; I am therefore in this respect on even terms with all the world. They can indeed lay upon me such and such things, and I can bear them through grace that helps me." If such be the temper of a Christian that he cannot suffer, he must be a slave. Every such person must be subject to the power of those that can hurt him, or do him an ill turn; only because he can suffer nothing. He cannot suffer, therefore he must serve; or yield to every one's beck that hath any power to hurt him. But he that can suffer, hath the mastery over himself; and remains in self-possession. The other is outed of himself; and must resign his will, his judgment, his conscience, and every thing, to the pleasure of another. Again, the principle of a good conscience also keeps a person from distress. When a man's own heart doth not reproach him, what can be distressing unto him? As Job said his should never do so, though he suffered, you know, very hard and grievous things. "My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live, till I die I will not remove my integrity from me," Job xxvii. 5, 6. Where such a disposition of spirit remains there can be no distress; no distress can ever fall there. And now to make some brief use of this subject, we learn,

I. How happy a good man is when no external trouble, though it compass him on every side, is yet able to bring him into distress! Is not this man a happy man that can defy the world? that can stand in the face of storms unhurt, untouched, unshaken? The matter deserves our serious thoughts, that there should be such a privilege as this communicated unto mortality; unto a poor creature dwelling in mortal flesh. It gives us to see, that there is somewhat that greatens the spirit of such a one to that degree, as to make it too big for all this world. For what else is the reason, why such a one cannot be distressed? only because things apt to distress in their own nature, and in a subject more liable to it, are not able to compass, and entirely comprehend within themselves that spirit, which they would aim to distress. The spirit of a good man, as such, is too big for all this world; and if it have that grace in exercise that is suitable to such a case, it is too big for this world entirely to compass. You cannot compress and straiten that which you cannot grasp. This world cannot grasp such a spirit. It is, I say, too big to be held within this narrow sphere. It looks above all sensible things. It is of too great a prospect to be confined, in its apprehension of things, to time; it looks into a vast and boundless eternity. Therefore such a person cannot be distressed in his spirit. It surmounts the world, and is too great to be straitened by all the powers thereof, which can never reach unto it. Or if it should be brought into some very great trouble, it looks beyond this present troublous state of things. It looks into eternity, and says, "If it be not well now, it shall be. Things at present are not as I could wish, but they shall be as well as ever I could wish hereafter." In short, you cannot confine the eye of such a one, but it will have a look at something beyond what is present and liable to common view. Therefore there is no way entirely to cut off relief from the spirit of a good man; for though it be troubled on every side, it is yet exempt from distress.

II. Hence we see also the vast difference that there is between such a one, and a wicked, carnal man that knows not God; who is unacquainted with, and unrelated to him. Such persons, when external trouble comes upon them, are presently distressed, or are very liable to be so upon every occasion. They have not the way of escaping the pressure thereof, that holy gracious persons have. A person is not distressed so long as he hath some way of

escape or other left. This is intimated by St. Paul himself, when he says; "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. It is no strange thing that an affliction or trial should be borne, when there is a way of escape.

But it may be said, Why is there any talk of bearing what I shall escape? I answer, it is plain that it is not escaping to suffer, that is there meant; but real hurt or damage by that suffering, so as to be not at all the worse for it, or prejudiced by it, at least in our spiritual concerns. It is such an escape as that, which our Saviour means in these words: "Watch and pray always, that ye may be counted worthy to escape the things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man," Luke xxi. 36. Not that they should escape suffering, for he had been telling them before, what grievous things they should suffer; but that they should receive no hurt from their sufferings: that is, upon the whole matter they should have no cause to reckon themselves sufferers, inasmuch as no damage should accrue to them from thence.

Now when a man hath a way of escape, he is not distressed; his state, I say, is not to be called a real distress. There is, at least upward, always a way of escape. David was sore distressed in Ziklag, after the Amalekites had invaded and burnt it with fire, and taken his people captive; yet it is said, that "he encouraged himself in his God," 1 Sam. xxx. 6. He looked upward, and had a way of escape or deliverance open to him from above.

But it is however said there, that he "was greatly distressed." I answer, it is very true, and so any good man may be in a great degree distressed, as well as David. Thus the apostle Paul, speaking of the impossibility of working any separation between him and Christ, and intimating that nothing could force him out of the arms of his love; not even persecution, or tribulation, nor famine, nor the sword; mentions distress also as the supposed lot of good men, Rom. viii. 35. But we must understand however only by this, that something may befall a good man which is apt to distress; but is not actually distressing, at least to that degree as to allow no way of escape. Then indeed a man would be in real distress, if that were true of him, which his enemies said of David; "Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God," Psalm iii. 2. But this is not the case; there is no state in which a good man may be, wherein there remains no help for him in God.

It was indeed a distressing case, which you find Saul was in, when he had caused Samuel, or somewhat that appeared like to him, to be called up; who said unto him, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" To whom Saul answered, I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. This was a grievous distress indeed: there was great trouble from without, and God was gone. Here then is the vastly different state of a wicked wretch, from that of a godly man under affliction in a time of trouble, and when distress is on every side; God is gone! God is afar off! Besides such a one has no disposition to take the way that leads to God. Thus Elihu speaking of such distressed wicked men, says, "By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?" Job xxxv. 9, 10. They lie grovelling, and groaning, ready to expire away under their burden; but it never comes into their mind, to inquire after God, saying, Where is our God? This is a thing unthought of, and therefore theirs is a most distressed state and condition; having no shift left them, nor knowing what to do. But there is always this shift left to a pious soul, if there be nothing else, namely, to look up. "We know not what to do," says Jehoshaphat, "but our eyes are up to hee," 2 Chron. xx. 12. But when a man hath simply nothing to do, no prospect of relief, then the case is very forlorn; and this, at length, will be the case of all wicked men. We may easily guess, that they have nothing left to do, who cry to rocks and mountains to fall upon them. This speaks plain desperateness; and yet this will be the case one day with those, who find not out in due season, the way of being exempted from distress. Then there will be a great deal of trouble on every side, when the world will be all in flames; and then it must certainly be distress. There will be, as our Lord informs us, (Luke xxi. 25, &c.) distress of nations with perplexity; the seas and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, when we shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory; and when the cry shall go forth, "Lo! he is come, behold his sign in the heavens!" Consider then how we are concerned to make sure of his favour, and to hasten to get into that state; wherein, though for a while we may not be exempted from trouble, yet we shall from distress: I mean, from that distress for which there is no remedy, which can admit of no relief.

I thought to have propounded something by way of counsel, in order to such a course as this. As,

1. Labour to be disengaged from all terrene things, the things of this world. If there our life is bound up, if we are troubled there on every side, we cannot but be distressed. But if the world be crucified to us, and we to the world, there can be no distress; the troubles of it cannot be distressing to us. Dead things cannot feel, cannot afflict one another. Let us say then, "The world is dead to me, and I am dead to it; we are crucified one to another." The dead can lie quietly one by another, without giving mutual wounds. And then too,

2. Draw nigh to God, that large and boundless good, in whom all fulness is. Of them that fear him it is said, "their souls shall dwell at ease," Ps. xxv. 13. The expression in the original is, "Their souls shall lodge or rest in goodness;" for the word there aptly signifies the quiet rest of the night. We must then draw nigh to God; and stick close to him in trust, confidence, love, obedience, subjection, and by a continual daily course of prayer. For they who are given much to pray will feel little of distress, in comparison of what they are else liable to. The Psalmist speaks of enemies, who were continually designing evil to him. "For my love," says he, "they are mine adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer," Ps. cix. 4. If there be any design against me, if my enemies are aiming at me, "I prayer;" for so the expression is in the Hebrew text: that is, I betake myself to prayer, my known and usual resort, and then I fare well. Thus, in so doing, you will find your soul to dwell at ease, and rest in the goodness of God. A wicked man, in the midst of his sufficiency, is full of straits; you, in the midst of straits, will be in the fountain of all-sufficiency, and have the all-flowing goodness streaming on every side. And in such a course you may come to experience what is here said by the apostle, so as no longer to look upon this as a paradox, but as that which your hearts can witness to; namely, that though trouble be on every side, yet thanks be to God. we find no distress.

SERMON III.*

James i. 2.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.

I TAKE it for granted that by temptations here, we are to understand afflictions; such as are, for trial's sake, laid upon the people of God. And whereas such, namely, those to whom the compellation of brethren is agreeable, are enjoined to count such afflictions matter of all joy; this plainly implies, that to such persons they are so. For they are not surely enjoined to judge otherwise of the matter than it really is, nor directed to make a false judgment of things. Therefore the truth I have to insist upon you may take briefly thus;

* Preached at Haberdashers' Hall, March 28th, 1677.

That the afflictions laid upon Christians, for the sake of trial, are to a right and spiritual judgment the matter of joy; even of all joy, as you have it here expressed.

Now that this truth may be capable of use, (which is the main thing I design upon it,) it is necessary that I do these two things in the general; namely,

FIRST, That I state this truth; and then,

SECONDLY, Give you the grounds of it.

FIRST, I shall state this truth, or show you how it is to be taken and understood. And here we have two things to open to you; namely, the object of that judgment, which is here directed to be made, and then the nature of it. The opening of these two things concerning the judgment we are to make of afflictions, which good men are exercised withal, will take up the whole of the business that is needful by way of explication; so as that you may have the distinct state of the matter before you.

I. I shall consider the object of the judgment here to be made; that is, the truth of this proposition, that afflictions laid upon us for the sake of trial are matter of joy. And this is the thing to be judged; as indeed in any proper act of judgment, a proposition is still the object; wherein one thing is affirmed or denied of another. And the truth of this proposition is the thing to be judged; that afflictions, such afflictions or temptations as the apostle speaks of, are really matter of joy. Therefore it is necessary that we open to you this proposition as the object of the judgment here to be made. Particularly that we,—1. Consider what is supposed here to be matter of joy; namely, afflictions, for the sake of trial: then—2. We shall open to you that which is affirmed, or supposed, concerning temptations; namely, that they are matter of joy; and then—3. The manner of the agreement of the one of these to the other.

1. Let us consider what it is that is supposed by the apostle to be matter of joy; namely, temptations, or afflictions for trial's sake. Not any man's afflictions, but those that befall a Christian; not any afflictions of a Christian neither, but those which are laid upon him for the sake of trial, as the word (πειρασμοῖς) used in the text doth plainly import. For it is one very well known, and very useful and necessary distinction of afflictions, that they are either corrective, even unto the people of God, or else tentative. This is not a distinction of afflictions considered in their natures, but taken from the end thereof: for in their natures they may be the very same, as the afflictions of good men and bad men may be.

Divers temptations are mentioned: which implieth not only multitude, as to number; but variety, as to kind. There may be the same kinds of them inflicted, for either the one or other of those ends. So that the distinction I mention to you is not of their natures, but it is taken from something extrinsical; as the end of any thing is extrinsical to the thing itself. God doth sometimes lay on afflictions to try, and sometimes to correct or chastise, his people. The principle of those afflictions, that are for the sake of correction, is displeasure and paternal justice; which God doth exercise upon his own family, and among his own children. And they have been wont, as indeed they ought, so to understand the matter. Thus says the prophet Micah, in the name of the people; "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him," Micah vii. 9. And his anger is sometimes said to smoke, and continue long to do so; as several expressions in Scripture, that I might turn to, import. But when the afflictions are to try, the principle thereof is not displeasure; but wisdom, and sovereign good pleasure. In this case, I say, they are to be resolved into wise and holy sovereignty, not anger, as their principle.

Now it is concerning afflictions so designed, or directed to this end, namely, for trial, that the attribute here in the text must be understood; that is, that they are matter of all joy, and are to be so accounted. And because we must take the state of the subject, so as to understand the apostle speaking not of punitive but tentative afflictions, as such; therefore we are a little more concerned to inquire in every case, how we may be able to discern when any affliction, or series of afflictions, are brought upon the people of God, or upon a particular person, for the sake of trial. For the stress of the whole business lies upon the right understanding of this matter, and is the main thing we have to do in stating of the truth before us.

In order to it therefore, you must know that though these two notions of afflictions, to wit, corrective and tentative, are very distinct; yet we are not to suppose that they are always to be separated. It is very possible that an affliction, or a state of affliction, may come upon a good man for both these ends at once; but it is impossible that both these ends should, at any time, be principal. When both these ends do fall in together, so that afflictions are sent both to correct and also to try; yet still one of them only is the principal end, and it is from thence that the denomination is to be taken. As for instance; that affliction is to be called tentative, or that state of affliction is to bear the name of temptation or trial, when this appears to be the chief end, which God designed and aimed at, in ordering such a state of things to be the lot of his people, or of this or that person. But when the principal end appears to be their chastisement, then they are to be accounted corrective afflictions; or punishments, and judgments, as these expressions are also used with respect to the people of God. But yet it may be said, "How shall we know which end is principal, when an afflictive condition comes to be the lot of any of God's people?"

This case cannot be very distinctly and particularly spoken to now, for that would take up all our time. I shall only say this one thing to it at present, which is very plain and clear, and I doubt not satisfactory to every one that seriously attends to it. When the people of God, who are in a state of affliction, have been and still are in a declension, as to matters of religion; or when this and that person can reflect, that they have been guilty of some very great enormity, some more notable transgression, and an affliction befalls them; why, truly, in this case they have all the reason in the world to look upon this affliction as punitive; that is, as principally designed for correction. But if the state of the church of God, when such an afflicted condition falls out to be their lot, is spiritually good; that is, if they have been for some time in a better condition than ordinary, or under no very observable delinquency and decay in their spiritual state; then the course of afflictions, which they at such a time fall under, is chiefly tentative; or to be reckoned as sent principally for the sake of trial.

And truly if we look into the afflictions which befell the people of God in common, at different ages, you will find, by what you have recorded in the Old Testament, concerning the church in those days, (which consisted of the Jews for the most part,) that miseries always befell them, when they were in a state of apostacy from God, or some more notable defection; which therefore constantly passed under the notion of corrections, or chastisements and punishments, upon that account. But as to what we find recorded of the sufferings of the church of God in the New Testament, (which you know gives us an account only of a small space of time) those afflictions and sufferings befell good men, at a time when the church of God was in its best state; and when there was most of the vigour, the power, and spirit of religion, that ever was known. Therefore we have most reason to look upon the afflictions, that befell them, as designedly tentative; whereupon it is that you have afflictions more usually spoken of, in the New Testament, under the notion of trials and temptations.

So that this is a short and summary account that I give you of this matter: afflictions befall persons for correction, when they are in their worst state; for trial, when they are in their best. And now you have the state of the subject (as far as it is necessary) cleared up to you. But concerning afflictions it is said, when it is discernible that they are principally tentative, that they are to be accounted matter of all joy. And,

2. This is the thing spoken of this subject, which we are now to speak to; we are to reckon these afflictions joy, *all joy*. We shall need to say but little here. This joy, if we take in the term *all* with it especially, includeth these two things; to wit, complacency, and gloriation: a being well pleased with these afflictions, and also a visible glorying upon such an account. It is true indeed these things are wont to be expressed by two different words, (Χαρὰ, and Ἀγαλλίασις,) whereas we have but one in the text. You

have them put together by our Saviour when he pronounces blessedness on them who suffer persecution for righteousness sake; "Rejoice," (says he) "and be exceeding glad," Matt. v. 10, 11, 12. There is inward pleasure, an inward sense of pleasure, and a certain kind of triumph, that appear and show forth themselves in conjunction. And when it is said, that we are to account it all joy, when we fall into such temptations, it implies, that we are to comprehend both these together in the sense of the expression. In which expression, we are indeed to understand joy objectively, as is usual, and so very obvious that I need not hint it to you; not, I say, the act, but the matter of joy, as we before explained it to you.

3. We have further to consider, concerning this proposition, the agreement of the object with the subject of it. How comes it to be truly said of afflictions, that they are matter of all joy? How do these agree together? It is very plain it is not a natural agreement; it is no agreement arising from any affinity that these afflictions have, in their own nature, unto joy. Nothing more remote than affliction, and joy. Affliction "for the present is not joyous, but grievous," Heb. xii. 11. Therefore that which connects them must be something extrinsical; somewhat which God puts in the case, so as wholly to alter it from what it would else be in its natural state. But this we shall have occasion to show by and by, when we speak to the grounds of it, which we are to come to presently.

II. Having considered the object, we are now to consider the nature of this judgment. The apostle bids us so to account such afflictions, as we have considered, all joy, as that this may be a fixed kind of judgment with us; for so the word ἡγήσασθε signifies. I shall particularly say but these two things about it:

1. That it must be a judgment spiritually enlightened, a judgment that is irradiated by a divine light shining upon it, by which the truth of the thing might be discerned; which otherwise would go for a paradox, and that the most incredible one that ever was heard of. It must be a heavenly divine light, which must inform that judgment that shall be able to discern the truth here asserted, that these trying afflictions are matter of joy. And,

2. It must be a judgment spiritually actuated and enlivened, that so it may become a practical judgment. By the former means it comes to be a clear judgment, when divine light once shines in the mind, so as that the truth of this matter appears very clear; by the latter means it comes to be a practical judgment, that is, such as is impressive of a proportionable correspondent frame of heart, which is that which the apostle chiefly intends here. For it would do persons but little good, to have such a notion only hovering in their minds concerning afflictions, that they are matter of joy; this would be but a cold business. The word *count* here in the text, is taken from the word ἡγεμονικὸν, from whence that phrase is taken, which is expressive of the leading faculty and power of the soul. But there is nothing leading where nothing follows; the one implies the other. It is therefore implied here that this must be such a judgment as commands what is duly and properly the subject of it, and what ought to be commanded; namely, the heart, and will, and affections of the soul. It implies that a person willingly bear a temper of spirit, proportionable to this judgment; that is, maintain a holy cheerfulness and vigour, and liveliness of spirit, through the whole course of such an afflicted state, as may happen to be his lot. Such a judgment it is that being enlightened from above is in some measure clear, and does not suffer us to be always in the dark, puzzled and entangled in our thoughts about the matter. In a word, it is a judgment that being actuated by a divine power ought to be practical, proportionable and conformable to itself; that so we may carry ourselves in a state of affliction, as though we judged in this case, that it is matter of great joy that we are brought into such a condition as this.

Thus now you have the state of the truth in reference to the things propounded to be opened, concerning the subject spoken of, and particularly the nature of the judgment that is to be made concerning the afflictions that befall good men; which, as I have shown, must be spiritually enlightened, and so spiritually enlightened as to be a practical principle in the soul.

SECONDLY, I now proceed to the next general head to be spoken to, after having stated this truth; and that is, to give you the grounds of it. What should be the ground of this, that to a true judgment such afflictions as these are should be matter of joy? I can but just touch at what requires to be largely insisted upon. In general, if this be our case, that we are Christians exercised with tentative afflictions, we are to count them all joy, if we would judge rationally and prudently, both upon God's account, and our own.

I. On God's account; and you have no reason to think it strange, that this should be alleged as a ground of a Christian's rejoicing in temptations. For God and good men are no such strangers to one another, but that wherein his interest is concerned and advantaged, they have real matter of joy, both upon the account of their relation to him, and the determination of their spirits towards him and his interest. Now his interest is manifestly concerned to great advantage in this case; and by this means it hath always been promoted, and his glory hath shone forth illustriously through the trials that have befallen his people.

If we speak of the glory of God, which is capable of being given to him; which cannot be the glory that is essential to his being, but his extrinsical, or adventitious glory, it may be said to lie in these two things: namely, in the display thereof, and in the agnition and acknowledgment of his glory upon that display. That is all we can make of glorifying God, and of his being glorified in the world; that there is a lustre shining forth, or a visible glorious representation of him made; and then, that this be acknowledged, or taken notice of, and he be confessed hereupon to be glorious. Why both these are concerned, whenever it falls out to be the lot of his people to be exercised with tentative afflictions.

1. There is a most visible display of his glory in this case; to wit, the glory of his power, of his wisdom, of his goodness, of his faithfulness and truth, both in sustaining and delivering his afflicted ones. There is a spirit of glory resting upon them in such a time and state as that is. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye," 1 Pet. iv. 14. Men cast upon you reproach, God puts a glory upon you; for, as St. Peter expresses it, "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you:" it stays and abides with you, and hath a fixed settled residence upon you. Agreeable hereunto is the tenor of that prayer of St. Paul for the Colossians: "That ye might be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and long-suffering, with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Colos. i. 11, 12. Here is a very great display of the Divine glory in this case. And,

2. The agnition or acknowledgment thereof is wont to ensue, which is the other thing considerable in God's being glorified. Such as feel supports from God in their afflictions, do highly magnify him in their spirits; yea, and many times his glory is acknowledged by afflicting enemies themselves. They are made to confess that they have to do with somewhat they cannot master, a spirit that is too hard for them, even an invincible spirit. They are made to own and confess that greater is he that is in the sufferers, than he that is in this world.

I have sometimes taken notice in the histories of former times, concerning the persecutions that befell the people of God more than once, that this expression hath been used in those cases, "The devil is in them;" that is, a more than an ordinary spirit. They could not but believe it was somewhat more than the spirit of a man that supported them; but if they called it by any other name, they must have reproached themselves, and acknowledged that they were fighters against God. However, they could not but have a secret conviction, (and it appears sometimes they had so,) that it was an almighty Spirit they were fighting against, when they were dealing with the people of God in this kind.

This then is the ground of joy to the patients themselves, that though they suffer, yet God is glorified. His glory shineth through all the clouds and darkness that involve them, and wherein they are inwrapt. The apostle speaks

as if he did not care what became of him, so that Christ might be but magnified by him, living or dying, Phil. i. 20.

II. I now come to show that good men, exercised with such afflictions as the apostle speaks of, ought to rejoice in them on their own account; not only because of the glory that redounds to God thereby, but also because of the advantage that accrues to themselves; which is twofold, namely, reputative and real.

1. A reputative advantage accrues to them from hence: for it is an honour and dignity put upon them to be called to suffer on this account, that is, for the sake of trial. As I remember, a heathen moralist says, "A soldier who is one of the number selected or picked out to go upon some very hazardous enterprise, if he be one of true fortitude and real valour, he will not say, '*Imperator de me malè meruit, sed benè judicavit.*' My general discovers a good opinion of me, and so he puts the honour of such a service upon me." So when God thinks fit to exercise his people in a way of trial, he puts an honour upon them, saying; "Come forth, now, you shall be my champions, you shall be the buts and marks against which all the power and malice of devils and men shall be directed, and yet I will make you stand." A poor bruised reed, God is able to make to stand, as in another case is said concerning a weak Christian. A reed that is bruised, and hangs its head, is capable of being made to stand against all the storms and rage of earth and hell. "You," as if he had said, "are some of my instruments, which I will make use of to baffle hell and all the powers of darkness. I will make them, even by you, confess themselves outdone."

Here then is a great reputative advantage, an honour and dignity put upon good men, to come forth as God's own champions; to contend on his behalf against every adversary and power in a way of affliction; that so they may overcome them by the blood of Jesus and the word of his testimony, not loving their lives even to the death. This is some of the honour of these saints of God. And if it had not been accounted so in former days, we should not have had, among the writings of some of the ancients, consolations writ purposely to them who missed of martyrdom; whose lot it was to be delivered, and not to fall as martyrs, in the common day of trial. And then,

2. There is a real advantage accruing from afflictions or temptations of this nature, both present and eternal. They that are exercised with them get great advantage by them at present, and foresee that they are like to do so hereafter; as is instanced in one particular in the words immediately following my text. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," James i. 2, 3, 4. So that at the long run they tend to their consummation and perfection. But first it is said, "knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience;" which carries its intimation along with it, that this one single advantage or gain by the trial of faith, even the grace of patience, countervails all evils whatever which such trials can bring upon them.

And certainly it is so, if it be considered what a heaven patience carrieth in it; namely, that meekness, that subjection to the Father of spirits, that complacency in his will, that holy fortitude and greatness of mind, which, I say, patience carries in itself. So that if a man had lost all that ever he had in the world, and got patience, he is a great gamer. Such a one is refined, and purged, and shines so much the more gloriously, as a star in the higher region, or the upper firmament. But this is only a leading thing to the universal gain, which they, who are spiritual, have in other respects; for upon this improvement of patience the whole inward man partakes of so much the more strength, vigour, sprightliness, and activity. Spiritual strength and soundness are thereby throughout promoted; so that they have great reason to glory with respect to the present gain and advantage, accruing from their afflictions.

And then with respect to hereafter, what matter of joy and glory to think how all will be compensated to them in the other world! The "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. iv. 17. If we suffer with Christ, we shall be also glorified together; "for I reckon," says the apostle, (this is the computation I make,) "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed," Rom. viii. 17, 18. These are things not to be mentioned the same day, one with the other, for there is no comparison between them.

Therefore you see how it is that this same joy doth guide itself, and which way the eye of the soul is directed to the exercise of it: not to pore upon afflictions alone, but to consider them as subservient to glory. Thus says the apostle, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And then it presently follows too, "We rejoice in tribulations also;" Rom. v. 2, &c. that is, considered with and in their subserviency to future glory. And this it is that makes them the matter of the highest joy.

But I would say something by way of *Use*, though the time hath almost overslipt me. Sundry things might be *inferred* from hence, which I shall but name to you.

I. Since this judgment, and the temper of spirit agreeable thereto, are peculiar to the case of trials or tentative afflictions, they must be necessarily otherwise where afflictions are visibly punitive, and principally of a chastising nature. As this judgment, namely, to count them all joy, answers the one case; so truly deep humiliation cannot but answer the other: even very deep humiliation, abasing oneself and lying low, and owning that the holy, righteous, jealous God is punishing them for the evil they have done. For in this case he is dealing with his children another way; he is not arraying them with glory, but clothing them with shame, before all the world. And therefore it is a season for them to be deeply humbled whenever that appears to be their stated case. Though to such persons there may be a mixture of pleasure, arising from the hope that God will bring such a state out of it (out of their sin and suffering) as shall turn into matter of joy afterwards. But the occasion of joy in such a case is more occult, and remote; and is wrapt up in a great deal more visible matter of sorrow, shame, and humiliation, when it appears that an afflicted state is brought upon them purposely for punishment and rebuke. And again,

II. We may infer hence, that mere patience is not enough for Christians under trying afflictions. It is not sufficient to be merely patient; they are to account their condition all joy. Therefore the apostle prays that more patience might be granted to the Colossians, in the place mentioned before; that they might suffer with joyfulness, and give thanks to him who had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 10—14. He writes there to such as were likely to meet with, or to have, very little of any earthly inheritance; rather to lose what they had, for the sake of Christ: and he intimates that it was not enough for them to be merely content, or patient under such a loss, but it was suitable to their state to be in a high triumph and exultation of spirit upon this account; because God was thereby making them meet for another inheritance with the saints in light. Those Christians do not quit themselves well, nor as becomes them, who do only not murmur or repine that they are tried by afflictions: for the thing to be aimed at, in the midst of all such exercises, is to thank God, and rejoice in the thoughts of what they are to enjoy; namely, an inheritance with the saints in their pure, lightsome, peaceful, blissful regions. "What an inheritance have I above! Blessed be God, though I lose all I have in this world, while he is making me meet for such an inheritance; and makes it evident he hath such a design in hand as this upon me!"

III. We learn too, that to be impatient and repining upon the account of afflictions, is greatly intolerable. To be patient merely, is not enough; to be impatient, is simplicity, folly, and sin. It is intolerable that we should think we are ill dealt with, when we are exercised with such afflictions as are designed only for the sake of trial. But I cannot stay on this head.

IV. We learn, that joy is most exceedingly connatural to true living religion. There cannot be a greater demonstration of it than this, that there can be no state, externally so bad, that can make their joy unseasonable; or that can make it an incongruous or unfitting thing for

them to rejoice. To have a disposition unto spiritual and heavenly joy is a thing very intimate to the constitution of a true Christian. That must needs be a very strong, predominant, prevailing principle in any thing, which converts and turns that which is of an opposite nature into nutriment to itself; such is the joy as can even feed upon and maintain itself out of afflictions. God's people can rejoice not only notwithstanding they are afflicted, but because they are so afflicted. The divers temptations they are exercised with are counted the matter of their joy. And we may yet further infer hence,

V. That there is something very peculiar in living true Christianity. For how odd a sound doth this carry to an unchristian ear, and how uncouth a taste to an unchristian heart, that afflictions are to be made and accounted matter of joy. But it is past all doubt that there is a real truth in the matter. We find that it hath been so; and that this is not a mere notion that hovers in the air, but is a practical thing, and has been a tried case. Do not we read of the apostles' rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ? Acts v. 41. This was not only so in their account, but was really so. So we are told of the believing Hebrews, that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, Heb. x. 34. What! for a man to rejoice to be undone? A strange paradox that any, who was not seriously a Christian, should count this matter of joy! Therefore true Christianity hath somewhat peculiar to itself belonging to it. It is a very extraordinary thing, which lies without the compass and comprehension of all, who do not experimentally know it.

Before I close, there are two things I would say to you by way of *counsel*.

1. Labour to fix this judgment in general upon your minds. Let it not seem to you as an uncouth incredible thing. It is a most certain truth, that afflictions in some cases may most reasonably be matter of joy. It is a sad thing when we cannot obtain so much of ourselves as to receive this notion, and to believe the truth of what is here implied. For when we are bid to count so, it is implied that it is really so; that is, that afflictions in such a case, namely, for the sake of trial, are matter of joy. But our spirits boggle at this; we cannot tell how to receive or entertain it. And then,

2. Endeavour that it may be your judgment with application to yourselves and your own state and case. And we must here take notice to you of what is in itself most obvious, that when we are directed to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations, we are also directed to do whatever is necessarily pre-supposed hereunto. It is never to be imagined or thought, that one who lives in sin, who is a secure, carnal, earthly-minded creature, and a stranger to God and heaven, if any affliction should come upon him, that he must off-hand count it a matter of joy. No, there is something must intervene. What then is it we should apply ourselves to? Why, to endeavour to get into a safe state of soul, and that things may be so with us God-ward, that if ever it come to be our case to be afflicted we may be able to pass this judgment, so clear and satisfied as to impress the heart, that afflictions are to be counted all joy, and in such a case may actually ourselves rejoice.

I thought to have insisted on sundry things here, but have not time. Yet I must observe, that to get our states clear with respect to God, and to keep and maintain our consciences both clean and quiet, are necessary to such a happy state as to able to rejoice in adversity. Then we shall suffer without grudging, and with rejoicing for the sake of Christ. How impossible is it ever to rejoice in an afflicted condition, till we have hearts brought under the power of a self-denying spirit; till we are mortified to this world, and our spirits loosened and disengaged from every thing terrene! The man whose heart cleaveth to this earth; who is taken with an ample estate, an opulent trade, a neat habitation, all desirable comforts and accommodations; the man, I say, who is so taken up with these things that his life is bound up in them, cannot endure the thought, upon any terms, of suffering in these kinds; it is death to him to think of it. But if a man's spirit be once divested of an earthly frame, and can tell how to digest the thoughts of being undone, he may rejoice, and say; "What am I, that I may not be undone? have not many as good as I been undone? who had as good an estate, lived in as good credit in the world? Why may not I be poor, come into straits, be destitute of friends, and exposed to wants as well as others?" When a man by familiar converse with these objects hath reconciled his spirit to them, so that he can digest these things, then he is in a way to rejoice in such a case, when it comes to be his, and is able to say; "Blessed be God that I have an estate to sacrifice for Christ! that I had liberty, and had still a life, to sacrifice for him, whenever he calls for it." If we did but thus labour beforehand to inure ourselves to such thoughts as these; if we did but put the case frequently and make the supposition familiar to ourselves, "What if we were to live in a wilderness? dwell in a cave of the earth? What if we were to go up and down helpless, living upon Providence for daily bread?" When we had, I say, used ourselves to think thus, and made the matter familiar to ourselves, we might, if it should come to be really our case, or God should put us upon the trial, turn it into a matter of triumph and great joy.

And so likewise it is highly necessary to live much in heaven, and to realize that state to ourselves; not to make it as a strange country, but this state rather in which we are. To a man that is abroad in some foreign country, which is full of war, trouble, and blood, it is some comfort to him (if he be certain of a way of return) to think, "Well! I am not to stay here long in this troublesome country; I know how to get home to mine own house in a peaceful country; I shall find all quiet there." How pleasant a thought, I say, is this, especially if a man is sure of a return! In this case he may be sure, and a Christian may say, "My own country is a quiet country; there will be nothing but peace, rest, pleasures, and delights to people of God. Here, indeed, I do not intend to abide. I do not expect to stay long here, this is not my country." Oh, to be here, as in a strange country, and to look upon that other, namely, heaven, as our own; will make it possible to us not only to despise, but even to rejoice in what we meet withal that is troublesome in this world, because it is part of our way home. It is indeed a dirty way, but it is our way notwithstanding to our better country.

I would enforce all that has been said by a consideration or two, and so conclude.

1. Think with yourselves how pleasant it is to have spirits got into this frame and posture, that we can really count it matter of joy to fall into afflictions. Oh think, I say, how pleasant it is! For how happy are those persons, who when they have a prospect of great evils before them, are yet not afraid of them! and certainly we shall not be afraid of that, which we have an actual disposition to rejoice in. In such a case we should be under the pressure of no very tormenting fear. "They that hearken to me" (saith Wisdom) "shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil," Prov. i. 33. He that has got to this pitch, who can count it all joy to fall into divers temptations, is arrived already to a safe dwelling: he hath so hid himself in the Divine presence, that he is secure from the fear of evil. No evil can ever reach him. And consider again,

2. That this is the only way we have to make any good or advantage of a matter that is bad in itself and in its own nature. For let us a little recount ourselves. I believe there are few among us, if any, that have not some prospect, more or less, of troublesome days a coming; a very afflictive condition. Pray what shall we do in this case, if we will not do those things that tend to bring us into a capacity of making this judgment our own, in reference to our own concernments? What have we else to do? Would we busy our thoughts how any such condition shall be prevented? Shall that be our concern? Shall we try if we can stop the sun, or alter the course of the stars? Do we think to change the external posture of the world? That is, alas! a hopeless thought, a vain attempt.

But we have a nearer and a possible thing to do, namely, to get the temper of our own spirits altered; brought off from this world; pitched upon another and a better world. We have no other course to take. Let us then drive the nail that will go. We have hopes that we may alter our spirits if we will employ our power so to do, but we cannot change the times and the seasons. That is our province and business. We have work to do here. We have a superintendency over our own spirits; here we are autho-

rized; God puts us upon it to see our own spirits, that if they be earthly, we may endeavour to get them made heavenly; if impure, holy; if dead, lifely; if vain, serious. This is our own proper business. So that as our case is, our circumstances are. We cannot hope to avoid suffering, our business therefore is to avoid suffering uncomfortably; this, I say, is our great business. To avoid suffering we cannot reasonably hope, though we should resolve to make shipwreck of faith, and a good conscience. For do we think, that all such persons that do so are secure from suffering? It is a remarkable passage from Scripture we have in St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. "There hath no temptation befallen you, but such as is common to men." That is one consideration. Another is, "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted, above what you are able," &c. 1 Cor. x. 13. It is the former I would now speak to; "No temptation hath befallen you, but such as is common to men." As if he had said; You are liable to afflictions as you are men, not merely as you are Christians; so that you cannot certainly save yourselves from them, though you should abjure your Christianity. For what can a man be safe from, that is common to man? These afflictions follow humanity. Are Christians the only men that are poor? that are crossed? or in a prison? If a man be a man (reckon only so) he is liable on that account to these things. Therefore, I say, since we have no way in the world to secure us from suffering, our great concern is to labour that we may suffer in the most comfortable way we can; so as that when it comes to be our lot, we may be capable of counting it all joy. And then we are a thousand times upon better terms, than if we were sure never to feel affliction; for that is only an external good; but the other is a spiritual good. And these are to be estimated according to the capacity and condition of the subject. I hope my flesh, my body, is not capable of so much hurt, as my spirit is of good. To be freed from afflictions, it is true, would be the advantage of the outward man; but to be able to bear them rejoicingly is an advantage to the soul; a thing capable of greater good than my outward man is capable of.

Therefore this is the great thing that lies upon us to do; to take heed, since we cannot be sure we shall not suffer, that we do not suffer as evil doers; neither in respect of the cause, nor of the temper of our spirits: to take heed that we suffer not so, as that it shall be the effect of a controversy between God and us; or the affliction be regarded as his coming upon us with anger and displeasure. We are to see to it that we have no rebuke nor anger to reflect upon; (these tend to shame, these are humbling things;) that we may regard his sovereignty and divine pleasure as things in which we may rejoice and triumph; which sovereign pleasure we may rejoicingly comply with, when once we can make it out, that the affliction of our lot is principally of a tentative nature, to try our loyalty to God, and fidelity to his interest.

SERMON IV.*

1 Peter v. 10.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

I SHALL spend none of your time at all in looking upon the context. And although there are many great truths, which lie within the compass of this verse, as any of you may easily apprehend at first sight; I shall only pitch upon that one which I intend to insist upon, and which it may be hoped will be equally suitable to the time and to our case, as it is to the text. You may without further preface take it thus;

That to a right and well-disposed judgment, spiritual improvements and advantages by sufferings, are more desirable, than a freedom from those sufferings themselves.

That the ground may be clear, I shall present you with a supposition or two, before I proceed to make out the truth itself. As,

First, We will suppose these expressions, to wit, "make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you," do all of them hold forth to us spiritual improvement and gain. I apprehend that none of you will doubt, but the apostle by these expressions intended the better state of those, to whom he wrote, in spiritual respects. We may suppose not of each person considered absolutely, and singly; but all considered in common, that they might be brought into a better state with reference to their spiritual concernments and affairs; which indeed the word καταρτίσαι doth more especially seem to hint to us. It signifies the setting in joint what was unjointed before, and quite out of frame; and so rather imports a relation to a community, than to a single person alone. But take all together, and no doubt the expressions do intend spiritual improvement and advantage. And then again,

Secondly, We may lay down further supposition, that the order of the sufferings here mentioned is not merely that of precedency in time, but of subserviency to some kind of cause that has an instrumental influence to their spiritual advantage. "After that ye have suffered awhile, or you having suffered a little," (as the words may be read, for the word "after" is not in the Greek text,) "may the God of all grace make you perfect," &c. But it would be very unreasonable to suppose, that these sufferings should only precede, and no more; or have only an idle priority in respect of time; for that were to suppose, that God, as it were, was consenting to it, that they should suffer for nothing, or to no purpose. And therefore we must conclude that the apostle intended to insinuate, that this precedent state of suffering would conduce and contribute much to their spiritual improvement; which he had principally in his eye, on their behalf. These things being supposed, I shall endeavour very briefly to evince to you,

I. That a well-informed judgment will reckon, and does reckon and account, as you have heard, namely, that spiritual improvements and advantages by sufferings are more desirable, than a freedom from those sufferings themselves. And,

II. Show you what reason and ground it has so to judge. And this I shall do only from the text, and with all possible brevity, that I may hasten, to the use which I chiefly intend.

I. That a well-informed judgment doth reckon spiritual improvements by sufferings to be more desirable, than a freedom from those sufferings themselves. We need no further light than what the text affords us to make this point clear, if we will but admit this twofold consideration.

1. That this great apostle was undoubtedly furnished with wisdom enough to understand what was really best for these scattered strangers, to whom he writes here. There can be no room for a doubt concerning this. And.

2. That he was prompted by that love, which would certainly engage him to pray for that which was best for them, according to his judgment. We can, I say, doubt of neither of these, if we will but consider that this prayer of his was indited by the Spirit of all wisdom and love. We cannot therefore doubt but that he both understood that to be best for them, which really was so; and that he thereupon prayed for that, in great kindness of heart to this poor people, which he so understood to be best. No more need be said to evince that a well-informed judgment will determine thus, that spiritual improvement by sufferings is better than a freedom from them, and more desirable. I proceed to show,

II. That there is a sufficient reason for such a judgment, which we may also see in the text; that is, that it is more desirable to have sufferings improved, than to have them presently removed from us. And this appears most suitable to that grace by which Christians are called; and also to that glory unto which they are called.

Observe the connexion of the request, which the apostle makes on the behalf of these scattered Jews; (as we have most reason to suppose them Jews converted to Christianity;) do but observe, I say, the connexion of the request,

* Preached at Plaisterer's Hall, February 28th, 1677.

with the preface to it; "The God of all grace, who hath called you to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, make you perfect," &c. It is to be supposed, that the preface in this prayer (as it is usually intended in all such prayers) should carry somewhat or other in it, agreeable to the matter afterwards prayed for. And so it really is here. For the apostle does not pray, that these Christians might not suffer; but that upon, or by the means of, their sufferings, they might receive that great and spiritual advantage, of being brought into a more perfect and better state than they were in before; and gain more strength, more stability, more fixedness than ever. And to pray thus, I say, is,

1. Most suitable to that grace by which they had been called; or most suitable to God, as he is the God of all grace.

But it may be said, "Is that suitable to the gracious nature of God, to let his own peculiar people be abused by a vile, wicked world? to expose that sort of persons (who of all others do alone love him, and are true to him among men) unto violent and injurious usage from the rest of mankind?" Yes, certainly; if we consider the matter well, it is most suitable. God is, it is true, a Father to that select people; but consider where the relation falls, and where it terminates. He is said in contradistinction to the fathers of our flesh, to be the Father of our spirits, Heb. xii. 9. It is certainly most suitable to the love of God to let his own people suffer, if you will allow his love to be correspondent to the relation. He is indeed related to them as a Father, but to what of them? To their spirits principally, and especially to that spiritual product, or new nature, of which he is the immediate Author. There the relation terminates, to that he is chiefly related as a Father, and there his care and love goes with the relation, "Let it be well with their spirits, and it matters not much how it goes with them any where else. I am the Father of their spirits; I am to take care it may go well with them upon spiritual accounts. Therefore if their flesh feel pain, if it suffer want, if it be pinched and straitened, if it languish and complain, it agrees very well with my relation to their spirits, as a Father to them. Let it then be so, let sufferings come upon them, if all this shall prove to the greater advantage of their spirits; if they shall thereby come to have so much more thriving and prosperous souls; if by this means they grow more refined; more freed from terrene dross; be more fitted for my fellowship; rendered more capable of doing me duty in their respective places; and of tasting and relishing the pleasure thereof: if this be the case, I think I deal with them but as a Father, whose relation is to their spirits."

The apostle speaks of this with a great deal of complacency, and as one that is highly well pleased. "Though (says he) our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18. He does not speak this with any kind of regret that he found the outward man so struck as to be continually liable to perish.

"No," saith he, "let it perish daily; I matter it not. Though it does perish, that signifies nothing to me, so that the inward man be but renewed day by day." And,

2. It is more suitable to that state of glory, whereunto we are called; as well as to that grace, by which we are called. It is very necessary to our being introduced into that glorious, blessed state, that we be prepared, and made some way fit for it, before we reach it. And the great concernment and necessity of this makes the apostle Paul bless God, with a great deal of triumph, on the behalf of those Christian Colossians to whom he wrote; and he puts them upon blessing of God, that though they were suffering to that degree as that they stood in need of all patience, yet that all this while he was making them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Col. i. 11, 12. He speaks of it as the proper matter of thanksgiving, that though they suffered so much as to require their being strengthened with all might, according to the glorious power of God; yet it was all well enough: they were so far from having cause to complain, that they had a great deal of reason rather to give thanks to God. As if he had said, "It is a pure, a bright, and lightsome region that you are going to, and you need a great deal of refining before you come there, that you may be fit to be received. You need to have your spirits clarified, and freed from all impure dross, even while you are suffering so as that all patience is requisite unto it. You have therefore reason to give thanks, if God by this means is making you meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints, in their state of life, purity, and perfection."

This is also intimated in that place before mentioned. "I do not care," as if he had said, "though the outward man perisheth, while the inward is renewed day by day." And how is it renewed? Why thus, the "light affliction, which is but for a moment, works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. But how do afflictions work out a state of glory for us? In answer to this, we are to consider what notion we ought to have of the glory, whereof the saints are to be partakers hereafter; and by which they are to be made happy and blessed. Now it is not merely an objective glory that can make me happy, and be the satisfaction of my soul? that is, to have only some glorious sights to behold and look upon, and no more. For I can be happy by nothing, which is not united to me; and it is impossible any one should be blessed by a distant good, severed from themselves. And therefore we are told how we are to conceive of this glory, by St. Paul, who tells us it is a glory that is to be revealed in us, Rom. viii. 18. It is a glory most intimate to the subjects, and by which they are made glorious; not merely to be seen, but what they themselves are to bear: and therefore the apostle says it is εἰς ἡμᾶς, to be revealed in, or into us. It is that impress of the Divine glory, which is imparted and communicated from God to the soul, upon the vision of his blessed face; by which it is transformed perfectly now into the same likeness, as much as a creature can be like to him. Here is the glory, by which souls are made happy and blessed at last; and into the stated participation of which they are now actually called by Jesus Christ.

Now consider this glory so, as here explained, and it is very apprehensible how the light afflictions, that are but for a moment, do work it out for us. For they gradually refine the soul after the image of the Divine nature, make it more and more conformed to God; and according to the degree of the progress to which this refining work is carried on by such means while we are in this world, is our participation of the Divine glory hereafter. According to the capacity of the vessel, which God hath designed to be a vessel of glory and honour, is the measure of that glory which is to be put into it in the other state. But certainly by this refinement, to which afflictions are so subservient and useful in this world, the soul is made more and more capable and receptive; it is refined and enlarged at once. And thus it is more suitable to that state of glory to which we are called, which was to be proved, in order to show that it is more desirable to have sufferings improved, than to be freed from those sufferings themselves. Therefore now to apply this, as the time will allow;

I. We may learn hence, that we have another interest to concern ourselves about, besides that of our flesh or outward man. For otherwise it could never be understood how that, which is really an offence and prejudice to the outward man, should be an advantage to us in any other respect. As chastising afflictions by a paternal rod are natural evils, but yet inflicted on us for spiritual good. It is plain then, I say, we have another interest about which we ought to be concerned.

II. We may further collect; that these two interests, as they are very distinct, so they are ordinarily, too, very opposite to one another. That may make for the advantage of the spirit or inward man, which is greatly to the hurt and prejudice of the outward; and that which contributes to the gratification and pleasure of the outward man, may be very prejudicial to the inward. These are opposite interests, and we should consider them as such; and it would be of very great advantage to us, through our

whole course, to carry this as a fixed thought with us, "That the interests of my flesh, and of my spirit, are often stated in such an actual opposition to one another, that what makes for the advantage of the one, is frequently hurtful and prejudicial to the other." For if we would but allow ourselves to consider this, and admit it as a fixed thought, then it would not, upon every occasion that occurs to us, be our first concern and care; namely, "What shall I do to save my flesh and outward man? how shall I order matters that all may go well with that?" especially as there is another interest in myself, which may be provided for by the methods of Providence, that cast a severe and threatening aspect upon the other. And,

III. We may hence further learn, that the interest of the inward man is much more considerable than that of the flesh; which is the subject of the supposed sufferings, of which the apostle speaks, who puts up a very solemn request for spiritual advantage by such sufferings. He that loved them so well does not pray, that they might not suffer at all; but only after that they had suffered a little, they might be perfected and established. Certainly our spiritual interest is more considerable than our outward interest; and we should be willing that the interest and advantage of the flesh should be sacrificed to the interest of the soul; and that which I am willing to part with for another, must certainly be less considerable than that other. But,

IV. We may also learn, that sufferings are not novelties among the people of God in this world; neither are they to be looked upon as novel, even the sharpest and severest of them. The apostle directs those, to whom he writes, in the same chapter, that they should look with another kind of eye upon an afflicted state, than to suppose it a new thing, or as if nothing like it was known before. In the verse before my text, he intimates that they only suffered such afflictions as were common to others in the world, and such as many good men had endured, who were gone before them. And in another place of this epistle he admonishes them not to think strange even of the fiery trial, ("which," says he, "is to try you,") as if some strange thing had happened to them; assuring them that after that they had suffered awhile, the Spirit of glory and of God should rest upon them. That they should suffer was reckoned upon, taken for granted; and therefore it speaks a very strange spirit among us, if the thoughts of any sufferings should presently startle us. What! are we grown so soft and delicate, that we must meet with no afflictions in the world? as if it were a more wonderful thing that we should suffer, than others who have gone before us in former days. Wherein are we better than they?

But I pass on to another use, which may be for conviction to us, who seem to be so much of another judgment from the apostle, in this important case. And there are two or three things which I would here premise. As,

I. That there is no present question depending whether we should simply desire to be freed from affliction, yea or no; or whether, considering the matter simply in itself, we may not judge it desirable to be free from affliction. This is not the thing concerned in the present discourse, nor any part of it. It will be easily acknowledged, that the sufferings we speak of are natural evils; and evil as such, or in itself, cannot be eligible to a reasonable nature. But the thing we speak of is, that when these two matters are compared; to wit, freedom from afflictions, and spiritual advantage by them, we should not prefer the former; not but that a freedom from suffering, simply in itself and alone, is a desirable thing; but compared with the spiritual advantages arising from thence, is not to be preferred or desired by us. And,

II. I again premise, that by judgment here I do not intend a mere notional, but a practical, judgment. For I make no question but we are all of the apostle's mind without any more ado; and agree with him that it is better to have spiritual advantage by affliction, than to be free from it. But when we speak of a practical judgment, here it is that our error lies, and wherein we are to be rectified. The practical judgment is that, to which the temper of a man's soul doth correspond; that which is of such power and prevalency with a man, as to impress its own likeness, or somewhat correspondent to itself upon his own heart, upon his will, his choice, and affections; and so consequently influence the course of his walking and conversation. The thing therefore I complain of, in this case, is, that the temper of our spirits is so unsuitable; so unlike the apostle's judgment in this case, that spiritual improvement by suffering is more desirable than freedom from it. These things being premised, I shall evince, 1. That there is a failure among us in these things, particularly that we are not like-minded with the apostle in this matter; and then, 2. Show you the great evil of it, that is, of our error in this regard.

1. I am to evince that there is a great failure or mistake in our judgment, if we are not of the same mind with the apostle, as to this point. And this I would do by putting a few queries to you, by which you may be able to convict yourselves wherein the matter does require, and will admit. As,

(1.) Whether are we more sensible of the external calamities which befall us, than of inward spiritual distempers? Suppose a person by some surprising providence lose all he had in the world, is reduced to the utmost distress and necessity, whether is not this more grievous, or more sensibly felt, than inward spiritual evils? "Do I so cry and bemoan myself, because of the body of sin and death, as I do when I have lost my friend, my husband, my wife, my child, my house, my estate, my pleasant delectable things in this world?" In such cases we cry out as undone persons; we mourn, and refuse to be comforted. "But I have an earthly, vain heart; a heart that will not be brought to live in love and communion with God; unapt to prayer, to meditation, to spiritual commerce with heaven." Do we so sensibly complain upon these accounts, I say, as men are apt to do under the sharp and acute sense of external evils? This shows which way the poize of our spirits inclines, and we may plainly discern it by urging ourselves with this question.

(2.) Whether do we more dread and fear the continuance and increase of inward distempers, or external sufferings? which, I say, is more the matter of our dread? I have a near evil that hath pressed me, and is like to do so still; a carnal, stupid, terrene, and corrupt heart; whether do I dread the continuance of this, or the increase of it, more than I do the continuance or increase of any external sufferings that are upon me, or may threaten me? If you should be told that there is danger of being devoured in all your external concerns by a formidable enemy; or that you are in danger of fire, of great losses, of coming into a decayed state in respect of your trade and traffic; which things would you think of with most dread? Should not we dread more the thoughts of being turned out of all, driven from house and home, of going to seek our bread in desolate places, of wandering in wildernesses and deserts, lurking in dens and holes of the earth? Should we not, I say, think of these things with more dread, than we ordinarily do of that close, latent enemy, that lies lurking at our very hearts and souls? namely, infidelity within, and disaffection to God; a proneness to depart from him, and a heart bent to backslide? Which sort of evils are we most apt to dread?

(3.) Which should we consider with more complacency, an external state of things just agreeable to such an idea as we could form to ourselves in our own minds; or an inward frame of holiness, agreeable to the idea which the blessed God hath set before us in the word of truth? which, I say, should we think of with more delight? Suppose we should have the prospect set before us of such a state of things in outward respects as we could wish; garners yielding all kind of store, nothing but prosperity, pleasure, and peace in our dwellings; all the liberty our hearts could desire, to do and walk according to our own inclinations: and frame again the prospect of an enlightened, lively mind and spirit; full of God, full of heaven, full of Divine love, full of spiritual strength, vigour, activity, and fervour in all holy exercises whatsoever; and which, I pray, of these seemeth the more grateful prospect to us? Or which is the more taking thing with our hearts, upon the view of the one and the other? to have in outward respects, all the opulence and prosperity our hearts could wish on the one hand; and on the other, to have hearts

disentangled and freed from sin, so as that we may go to God upon all occasions with freedom, or without restraint, and always converse with him with delight?

Such questions as these closely urged may convince some, as the case may require, how much they differ from this apostle; and are of a different sense and estimate from him, in reference to what we are speaking of. And if there be such a disagreeing judgment in this case, then we are to consider,

2. The great evil of it. And this I might represent to you very largely; but at present, take some account of it only in these few particulars.

(1.) It speaks great injudiciousness in the matter of discerning between things that differ, and which doth more excel. It is one great part of the work and business of judgment to distinguish between things, that are of different value from one another; and he is a very injudicious man, who is not able to prefer those things that are more excellent, which when compared and judged of do vastly differ: as it would argue very great injudiciousness, indeed, if I could not tell which of the two to prefer, a gay feather, or a rich diamond. The odds is so vastly great here, that it must needs argue a great want of discerning the just value of things: and so it must in like manner if we cannot tell which is to be rather chosen, a little freedom from pain and affliction, or that which is a great advantage and gain to the inward man.

(2.) It argues very great unbelief of the truth of God's word in reference to this very case. It is expressly said, All things shall work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose, Rom. viii. 28. But we do not believe this: for it is plain that if we did believe it, it were then altogether impossible we should reject or less value that, which at the same time we believe to be the greater good. For it is spiritual good that is there meant, which is to be wrought out by external natural evils. And can we tolerate in ourselves an habitual indisposition to take God's word? Sure, methinks, we should look upon this as a most intolerable thing.

(3.) It argues a very low and mean temper of spirit, when we do not know how to value and savour most our best and most excellent good. It shows that we have a very vile esteem of our own souls, when we are more concerned about a clod of clay, a lump of flesh, than we are about them, or their benefit and advantage. And,

(4.) It argues most unworthy thoughts of the wisdom and goodness of the providence of God, with respect to those sufferings and afflictions we speak of. It looks as if we did not really believe, that they are brought upon us for some greater good, than any we can lose, or be indamaged in, by them; or that we thought that neither wisdom, or goodness, conducted the course of affairs towards us. What account can we give, or what reasons produce, why the course of Divine Providence should run so and so, (as it many times has done in the world,) as to cast smiling fair aspects on the worst sort of men, and frowning severe aspects on the better sort? Hence men have been apt to make very sinister interpretations and applications. Thus the prophet Malachi charges some in his time: "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" Mal. ii. 17. And truly, though we have explicit formed thoughts otherwise, yet the sense of our hearts will seem to be agreeable to such thoughts as these, if we tolerate in ourselves the error which I am detecting, and representing the evil of; that is, of supposing that it were better to be freed from afflictions, than to have them improved to our gain and advantage. Either we must think, that afflictions come upon the people of God by chance, and so that God has no design at all by such an ordering of things; or else, that he afflicts his people out of hatred and perfect ill-will; both which are monstrous and horrid thoughts. It were altogether an unaccountable thing, upon the whole matter, why the course of the dispensations of God's providence should be as it ordinarily is, that the saints should be exposed to sufferings and afflictions, while the wicked live in ease, prosperity, and pleasure; I say, this were unaccountable, if it could not be said that there is some greater good to be wrought out by these sufferings, which shall abundantly compensate and countervail them. But if we persist in the error I speak of, we lose the only way of solving this difficulty of providence.

(5.) To represent the evil of this error yet more, I would observe, that it argues much impatience and weakness of spirit: for patience is passive power, fortitude, or ability to suffer. It argues very great weakness when we had a great deal rather not be good, than suffer affliction. Sure it is a sign that we can suffer nothing. And if there be such a disposition to faint in the day of adversity, our strength is small; as saith the wise man; and this is not only our great infelicity but our sin.

(6.) It is a tacit choosing of sin, rather than affliction; and certainly that is a very bad thing. It is manifestly so, if we consider and look upon the case as it is. "Let me be impure still, drossy and terrene still, unlike to God still; so my flesh may but escape, my sense be gratified and indulged, and incur no prejudice."

(7.) Lastly, It argues a great deal of pride; and also insensibleness both of what we deserve and what we need. If any can by no means bring their spirits to think of suffering, there commonly lies at the bottom an insensibility of what they are; what wretched hearts and untoward natures they have. It is little apprehended what we deserve, and what we need, when we look upon such an aspect of providence as unsuitable; which threatens us with suffering, and is like to prove afflictive. This should be the sense of our hearts: "Alas! whatever I suffer, it is much less than my iniquity deserves! Yea, if I suffer never so severely, it is but what the exigency of my case requires. My heart is very sleepy and dead, and needeth rousing; it is very drossy, and needs a hot furnace." And we should think so if we thought of ourselves aright, and if too good an opinion of ourselves did not blind our eyes. I might mention several things more, but the time permits not. I shall only desire hereupon in the close, to recommend two things;

1. That we should fix this judgment of the apostle in ourselves, as the standard and measure of our own. I judge thus, as the apostle Paul says; "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18. As if he had said, "This is my logic, I compute so upon the whole matter; and this is the result I come to, having considered it thoroughly, and viewed it on every side." Let us settle our judgment of this in like manner, and record it: "This was my mind at such a time, and I came then to be convinced of the truth of it. I will never alter it, till I see better reason (which I suppose I never shall) for laying it down, than I had to take it up." And,

2. Agreeably hereunto let us direct the scope, current, and end of our prayers, on such days as these, as the apostle here doth his. It is necessary our hearts should be brought to an agreement with our judgments. What is the good I should most desire, and wish, and seek for my soul this day? If this be a right judgment which we have now heard of, it will be very good for us, at such times as these, and even at all times, in our prayers, to say: "I pray not that I may be freed from suffering; that is not the great thing I request. As to that I refer myself to the Divine pleasure, and acquiesce in the determination of Providence. But, O Lord! I have another request to make unto thee, that whatsoever shall befall me, I may have more of thine image; more life and strength; vigour and heavenliness; fitted for holiness in this world, and blessedness in the other. And then let my sufferings be what they will, so they be but subservient to this great design, of procuring my spiritual advantage."

And we pray upon pretty sure grounds when we pray thus. We do not need to doubt whether this be agreeable to the Divine will or no. We are upon a certainty. If I should insist peremptorily in prayer upon this and that temporal good for myself, or the community I belong unto, it may be said; "Where is the promise? and thereupon, where is the faith of being heard in such a prayer?" But I am sure I pray agreeably to his own will, when I pray, that I may be brought into spiritual prosperity. I am sure therein to suit with what he himself doth com-

mand. This will be acceptable and well-pleasing to God; and turn to my ineffable good and advantage, both here and hereafter.

SERMON V.*

Isaiah lxiii. 10.

But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.

In the foregoing part of this chapter you have a representation, as it is generally agreed, of our Lord Christ in triumph; returning as a conqueror from his victories, with garments discoloured with the blood of the slain. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." The enemies, whom the Messiah is supposed to have engaged against, are represented and set forth by Edom, and the metropolis thereof, Bozrah; because they were the next enemies to the church of God, mostly confined within Palestine, upon which Idumea bordered, and who were continually vexatious, and afflictive to them: by these, I say, are the spiritual enemies represented, which our Lord Jesus Christ was to set himself against. And so I have taken notice of a certain author (though I profess not to like all his allegories) who allegorically speaks of the carnal part, under the name of Edom. "The mind or spirit ought to follow God unweariedly, without deviating or turning aside, lest he come into Edom:" alluding no doubt to the word itself edom or earth, as the name of Adam comes from the same root. Against these spiritual enemies, that readily fall in with our carnal earthly part, did our Lord Jesus Christ use his prowess, unto a glorious victory and triumph. This being represented, how ready the Redeemer was to undertake on the behalf of them, who were to be defended and saved by him; a reflection is made upon God's former dealings on the behalf of this people, and their unequal carriage and deportment towards him, in the seventh, eighth, and ninth verses. But I cannot go distinctly over them. Unto which this complaint is subjoined; "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them."

There are two things, which present themselves to our view and consideration, from these words: namely, that the rebellions of a people professing the name of God, are very vexatious to his Spirit; and that such vexations engage him against them as their enemy. To speak to both these together, for the sake of despatch, I shall do only these two things.

First, Inquire concerning the evil done; that is, vexing the Spirit of God, by rebelling against him. And,

Secondly, Concerning the evil suffered; and that is, his turning against them, so as to become their enemy. Upon which the use of all will ensue.

First, As to the evil done, we are to inquire in the first place concerning the nature of it; and then, in the next place, the cause thereof.

1. Let us consider the nature of the evil done, namely, the vexing of the Spirit of God. We are not to understand it as if the blessed Spirit of God was capable of such vexation, as we are in ourselves; that is, of real perturbation or passion. That, common reason will tell us, the Divine nature is not capable of. But yet notwithstanding, this doth not signify nothing; there is some great thing lies under this expression, which we may conceive of in these two particulars.

(1.) His will is really crossed; somewhat is done, that is against his will. I mean his will concerning our duty, not his will concerning the event; against his preceptive will, and consequently against that good, which he wills to us upon the supposition of our compliance with his just and righteous will. He really wills many things in reference to men, which he doth not will effectually to procure that they shall be done. He wills our obedience and duty; and, as this is connected with it, he wills also our felicity and happiness. The will of God in the former part, is expressed by his precepts; in the latter, by his promises, so far as they are of a general tenor. But there is a will of his in reference to the event, of which it may be truly said, "Who hath resisted his will," Rom. ix. 19. When the commands of God are disobeyed, and persons by their disobedience rush upon vengeance, and put themselves under the effects of Divine displeasure; then is that done, which is averse to the legislative will of God, as it is signified to us by his word. And this is implied in the expression in the text of his being vexed; namely, that there is a matter or object lying before him, at which he may take offence, or resent.

(2.) It is implied also, that he doth apprehend and resent this matter; though without any commotion or perturbation. He resents it so as not to look upon it as a matter of indifference. It does not escape his notice, as profane, atheistical spirits are apt to fancy; who say, "The Lord shall not see, neither will the God of Jacob regard it," Psal. xciv. 7. No, there is no such thing to be imagined. God takes notice of the matter, and resents the wrong done to him; yet so calm is the resentment, as every way agrees with the felicity of the Divine nature. It is this which he lays up in store, as it is emphatically expressed by Moses, and seals up among his treasures, Deut. xxxii. 34. This he keeps by him as the just matter of a controversy, which he will manage; and will animadvert upon it in his own time, and when a fit and proper season shall come. So much then are we to conceive as spoken of God, or of the Spirit of God, under the expression of its being vexed.

2. We are now to inquire concerning the cause of this vexation; or show, what it is that thus vexes the Spirit of God. We may well understand in the general that sin does so; being in its own nature a direct contrariety to his good, and holy, and acceptable will. But especially rebellion against the Spirit of God is vexatious, which is a higher pitch of sin, and implies a continued course of disobedience. Rebellion speaks a prevalent and continued malignity of sin. "They rebelled, and vexed his Spirit."

But to be more particular here; we may understand what sin is more especially vexing to the Spirit of God, if we allow ourselves to consider what the titles and attributes of this Spirit in Scripture are. By these we shall know what is the tendency of the office and operations of the blessed Spirit of God; and so more easily conceive what tends to vex, and to grieve it, as you know the expression is elsewhere. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," Eph. iv. 30.

(1.) The Spirit of God is styled the Spirit of truth, John xiv. 17. It is therefore very grievous and vexing to this Spirit, to have a light esteem of divine truth; to be indifferently affected towards it; to have a loose adherence to it; an easiness to part with it; and much more a proneness to oppose it, and run away from it. This, I say, must needs be vexing to the Spirit of God. And because I foresee I shall be able to speak but little to the use, I desire you as we go along to make reflections on each head; and to consider how far you may suppose yourselves guilty, and how far this age (professing the truth of God) is guilty of vexing the Spirit in this and other respects. Again,

(2.) It is mentioned in Scripture under the name of the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29. It is therefore very vexing to this blessed Spirit, when that grace, of which it is the author, and which it is its office and business to convey and apply, or effectually to reveal, is rejected; when in that Gospel under which we live, and which is the ministration of the Spirit, grace is offered and despised; when there are few that express any regard to, or any desire or value of, the Spirit of God; this is a most vexing thing to this Spirit.

(3.) It is called the Spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13. Infidelity therefore must needs be reckoned a most vexing

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thing to this Spirit. When persons continue under the Gospel in obstinate unbelief; and the great things, there revealed and discovered to us, are but as a tale that is told; or regarded no more than we would regard the word of a child; a most vexing thing to the Spirit of God this must be understood to be. Moreover,

(4.) It is a Spirit of contrition and repentance. This is an effect that is attributed to this Spirit as the author of it. The Spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured forth, as it is promised in Zechariah, (Zech. xii. 10.) and then it is that souls shall mourn over him whom they have pierced, and be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. An impenitent hard heart, a heart that cannot repent, is a most vexatious thing to the Spirit of God. We cannot conceive a greater vexation to him, than to find hearts hard as rocks and stones, under the dispensation of the everlasting Gospel.

(5.) It is styled the Spirit of love; which is the great principle that disposes and inclines the soul towards God. He hath given us the Spirit of his love, (2 Tim. i. 7.) that principle which influenceth, and is the life and soul of all the communion there is between the blessed God and those that belong to him; which itself therefore is called "the communion of the Holy Ghost," 2 Cor. xiii. 14. A cold heart then towards God, a heart that is disaffected to him, that keeps at a distance from him, that will not be engaged in sweet communion with him through love, is a most vexing thing to his Spirit. Again it is in the

(6.) Place, called a Spirit of power and of life. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, (John vi. 63.) says our Lord. And again St. Paul tells us, God hath given to us the Spirit of power, 2 Tim. i. 7. It is a very vexatious thing to this Spirit, when any indulge themselves in deadness of heart; when they allow themselves to be formal, lukewarm, and indifferent; neither cold nor hot, as it was said of the Laodicean church, (Rev. iii. 15, 16.) whom our Lord threatens therefore to spew out of his mouth; a strong expression of his being vexed, and of his resenting the matter with very high displeasure.

(7.) It is styled the Spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4. And here in our text it is said, They rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit. This is a most vexing thing, when persons professing the Christian name indulge themselves in a liberty to walk at random, are impatient of restraints; affect libertinism; have not refrained their feet, but have loved to wander; therefore the Lord doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins, Jer. xiv. 10. When no bonds can be endured; when the yoke and burden of our Lord Jesus Christ are apprehended uneasy, grievous, and intolerable, and the resolution is come to this, "Let us cast away his cords, let us throw off his bonds from us, he shall not reign over us;" when the law of sin and death contesteth to that height against the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, as to engage us to comply with the lustings of the flesh; this is a most vexatious thing to the Spirit of our purity and holiness.

(8.) It is a heavenly Spirit, and the design of all its gracious operations upon souls is to fit them for heaven. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." 2 Cor. v. 5. And again says the apostle, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us of God;" even those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. ii. 12, 9. A worldly heart therefore is a vexation to this Spirit; that is, when we mingle with, and suffer ourselves to be swallowed up of the spirit of this world; the inclinations and tendencies of which spirit are earthly, and running downwards; while the Spirit of God is aiming to lift us up towards God and heaven. Again,

(9.) It is a Spirit of prayer. So it is called in Scripture, the Spirit of supplication, Zech. xii. 10. It is the great business of this Spirit to act souls, and to raise them to God, in the way of prayer. It is a very great vexation therefore to the Holy Spirit, when persons grow to a prayerless disposition; do not care to converse with God in this duty; are slow in the business of prayer; either not minding it, or doing it as though they did it not; this, I say, is a very vexing thing. So he interprets it, and speaks of it with resentment; "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou art weary of me, O Israel," Isa. xliii. 22. When persons, who formerly loved prayer, are now grown out of love with it; when those, that have taken pleasure in being in their closets, and shut up in corners, are now grown strange to him, and care not to come nigh him in that way; this is especially to provoke and grieve the Spirit. The very bent and tendency of such a soul runs now directly counter to his proper design and business; which is to engage the souls of men with God in that great duty, wherein they may enjoy continually a fruitful and useful commerce with him. But they decline, and will not be brought to it by this means. This is also a very bitter vexation. And again,

(10.) It is a Spirit of sincerity and uprightness; and wherever it obtains, it makes men upright and sincere. Thus it is called the Spirit of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. Hypocrisy therefore, or a deceitful dealing with the blessed God in matters of religion, is a most vexatious thing to his Spirit. When there is only a show and appearance of love, and devotedness to him; and this only made a cover to a false disloyal heart; this is an abomination unto God. He loves truth in the inward parts, and his countenance beholdeth the upright; giving them pleasant, smiling, complacential looks, which are plain indications of his approving and being well pleased with them. So again, he cannot but frown with displeasure where there is falsehood and deceit; where there is an unsound heart; a latent hypocrisy, as if we designed to impose upon him by a cheat and show; to deceive and mock him, who cannot be deceived, neither will be mocked.

(11.) It is a Spirit of union, peace, and meekness, among them that belong to God. It is designed to form the hearts of believers to these things; and so far as his Spirit is given, one heart and one way are also given; as we may see from Ezekiel xi. 19, compared with other scriptures. Animosities among the people of God; heartburnings, whether they be upon a common, or a particular, personal account; are the most vexing things imaginable to the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of union, peace, and concord, and the very soul of the mystical body. It is a very vexatious thing when one member of this body goes to fight with another; and it may be, some against the common interest of the whole. And it is, in the

Last place, a Spirit of sobriety and temperance, in opposition to grossly sensual lusts. It is a very vexatious thing to the Spirit of God, when among a people that profess his name, there is a general profusion, and running into vile sensual lusts. Some are sensual, not having the Spirit, Jude 19. The connexion is very observable. Whereas God gives his Spirit, to form a people to that purity, that they may be different from the rest of the world; they allow themselves to run into the same excesses of riot. And I believe there are few of us that ever heard or read of an age, in which there were more gross instances of impurity among professors, than the present. How many instances do we hear of this kind! It must needs be very vexatious to the Holy Spirit, whose design it is to form a people unto God, to bear up his name in opposition to a commonly dissolute and debauched age.

You see then as to the evil done, what it is, and what is the cause of it; namely, sin, and more especially rebellion in those instances wherein the designs of the Spirit (as represented to us by various titles and attributes in Scripture) are most opposed. We are therefore now,

SECONDLY, To inquire concerning the evil suffered hereupon; or which we may expect will be inflicted on persons on this account; namely, his turning against them so as to become their enemy. Here we should speak distinctly,

I. Concerning the nature of this evil; and,

II. Concerning the issue of it, and how justly it does ensue in this case.

I. Let us consider the nature of this evil, and show what is imported in it. And here something is expressed, and something is implied in the words of my text; "therefore he turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." It is implied, that he shall cease doing for such a people

as he hath done If he was wont formerly to be a bountiful, liberal benefactor, he shall stop his hand. And especially it is to be expected, that we should be so dealt with in that very respect, wherein we have been vexatious. That is, Have we vexed the Spirit of God? then it is natural to expect that the Spirit of God will retire. This is certainly implied in his becoming an enemy to us. If he become an enemy, it is not likely he should hold that friendly commerce, which sometimes he hath done. If God become our enemy, his Spirit shall withdraw from us; shall not strive nor wrestle with us. And then also these words express some positive evils against such persons; which I might instance in many particulars, but cannot now mention them.

II. I am to consider how justly this penal evil does ensue in this case; namely, that God should turn against those who rebel and vex his Spirit. This is to be collected from the greatness of the evil done. Consider therefore how just cause and matter of provocation this injurious dealing with the Spirit of God doth carry in it. Particularly,

1. Consider that this is very despiteful dealing, to do that which will vex his very Spirit. Sinners of this kind are expressly said to do "despite unto the Spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29. And surely to do that, which must directly contradict the very business and design of the Spirit, is a most spiteful kind of wickedness.

2. Consider that this is a wickedness, wherein the most immediate kind of affront is offered unto God. He deals with men in a more distant way when he deals with them in his providence, or the outward manifestation of his will in his word. But when he comes to deal with the spirits of men, and to have his work within them, and their spirits resist and oppose him; there is then a most immediate contest between the blessed God and them. And we cannot but think this is a high provocation unto God, and reckon upon this issue, that he must hereupon become our enemy. And,

3. It is to be considered that sinning so as more directly to vex the Spirit of God, does carry with it a withstanding of the Spirit in that which is its proper office: which is a great aggravation to the wickedness. It is one thing when I withstand a person in a thing, which he does casually and by the by; and another when I withstand him in that which is his stated business. It is, you know, reckoned a high affront among men to be resisted and withstood in an office. To oppose an ordinary, private person, is but a small matter in comparison of affronting an officer, in the execution of his office. The Spirit of God, when it is about the work of diffusing Gospel light and grace, is in the work of its own office. And when persons do such things as are vexatious in this respect; that is, oppose and withstand the Holy Spirit in its proper stated business, this must needs be highly provoking. It is a bold and insolent affront done to the blessed God; and therefore may well infer upon such a people that dreadful thing, that God should turn against them, and become their enemy.

Now as to the use (though these matters have been more lightly touched and considered than the matter required, for want of time) we may infer the following things:

I. We may infer hence, that among a people professing the name of God, the Spirit of God is wont to be at work; and where it is not doing any work, we cannot suppose it to be thus vexatiously resisted, and contended against. It was the testimony that Stephen bore against this people, even dying, that they constantly rebelled, and vexed the Holy Spirit. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye," Acts vii. 51. Now what doth this imply? Inasmuch as it is said expressly that there was a war kept up against the Spirit of God, from age to age, and from generation to generation; it implies, that as they were from age to age a professing people, so from age to age the Spirit of God was still, more or less, striving with them; or else how could they be said always to resist? Where there is no striving, there is no resisting. We ought therefore to consider this, that ordinarily where the Gospel is professed, there the Spirit of God is at work, more or less, though not always so as to prevail. It is a free Spirit; and works, as the wind blows, where it listeth, and to what degree also. But I conceive, that in all those who live under the Gospel, the Spirit of God moves at some times, in one degree or another. For it is hardly to be imagined, that any should wear out a life's time under the Gospel, and not, one time or other, have the injection of some good thought, some check or rebuke, as to their evil course; and some inclination, at least, to return, and alter their course. And I doubt not but there is a parity between these two cases; that is, as in matters of consolation the Spirit of God co-operates with our spirits, so he doth in matters of conviction, whether it ever becomes effectual or no. So that I reckon it most safe, and most honourable to God, when any injection of that kind is made in the conscience of any man, that lives under the Gospel, to ascribe it to the Spirit in its common operations.

II. We are hereupon to reflect and consider, whether this may not be much our case and the case of the generality at this time, even thus like the Jews to have vexed the holy Spirit of God, which hath been for a long season dealing with us. Recount with yourselves the particulars mentioned; and think whether there has not been a great deal of vexation given the Spirit of God in those several ways. But I cannot stand now to remind you of them.

III. Let us be hereupon persuaded to hasten the taking up this controversy (for it is a dreadful thing to have it depending) by humbling and abasing ourselves in the dust, before the Lord; for ourselves on our own account, and on the behalf of the generality of those among whom we dwell. Surely this ought to be much the business of such a day as this, even deeply to humble ourselves before the Lord, for the vexation given to his Spirit; and that our temper, course, and spirits run so directly counter to him. We should not want matter of humiliation for many such days, if we did but seriously consider this case; though every day should be kept a fast, and as a day of humiliation on this account. And indeed it is sad, when the matter of humiliation is so very great and manifest, there should be any appearance of declining these occasions, or of shyness in closing with them. We desire to bless God for it, that it is in the hearts of any to join us, but yet it cannot but be observed that there is too great a coolness; and many persons are easily diverted, it is to be feared, from closing with such occasions as these. And methinks it is more especially to be observed, that but few masters of families do appear before God, at such times and on such occasions; who might represent their families, and in the name of them come and lie prostrate at the foot of the throne of grace.

Give me leave but to reflect upon a passage, which is not unworthy of our notice upon this occasion. They are the words of those idolatrous women that burned incense to the queen of heaven, who said to the prophet Jeremiah, "When we burnt incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her without our men?" Jer. xliv. 19. "Did not they come and fall in with us?" It is a sad case, if the men of our times cannot be as forward to fall in with the ways and methods of atoning God, and pacifying his displeasure against us, as they were in those days in ways of so high provocation!

IV. Let us apply ourselves particularly and with great earnestness to supplicate the continuance of the Spirit, where it remains breathing in us; and the restoring it, where it had been in any measure restrained. O, how loud and importunate should our cries be upon this account! It is a fearful thing to lie under the guilt of continual vexation to the Spirit of God. You know there is a particular accent put upon such wickedness. You know there is such a thing as the sin against the Holy Ghost, in an eminent sense; and we had need to take heed of every gradual approach unto it. I do not think that every sin against the Spirit of God, is that sin against the Holy Ghost; but we had need, I say, to look to ourselves as to any gradual approaches to it. For how great is the censure laid upon that sin! It is therefore a fearful thing to have our heart and way bent against the way and course, the tendencies and motions, of the Holy Ghost.

And when we consider the matter in this light, what reason have we to cry out, as we find the Psalmist does!

"Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me," Ps. li. 11. It is a great matter God hath against us, when he hath this to charge us with, namely, the vexing of his Spirit. It is a part of the charge against Sodom, that they vexed Lot's righteous spirit, 2 Peter ii. 8. It is mentioned as a high aggravation of their wickedness, that they vexed the spirit of a righteous man. But how much more heinous a thing is it to vex the Spirit of God! Is it (says the prophet Isaiah) a small thing to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Isa. vii. 13. And the more we apprehend the heinousness of this matter, the louder should our cry be, "Take not away thy holy Spirit from us, that Spirit, which we have vexed, grieved, and done so much to quench." And to this purpose consider, before I conclude, these two things.

1. The exigence of the case, and the necessity of having this Spirit. Alas! what will become of us when this Spirit is gone, quite gone, and breathes no more? What do we conceive of ourselves, we that carry about with us bodies of flesh, animated by a living soul? What becomes of us when that spirit retires, and is gone? Into what noisome putrid carcasses do we turn in a short time! And what a miserable carcass will that church become, out of which the Spirit of God is gone! a body without a soul! an unmoving breathless thing! If God should leave us the Gospel, and the external frame of ordinances, what will that avail us when the Spirit is gone? The matter would be with us, as with some noble stately mansion-house, that is deserted of its great inhabitant. There you may come in, and walk from room to room, and find nobody, where there was once great resort, and a great deal of splendour, pomp, and joy, but now, nothing but desolation! Such a thing will that church be, out of which the Spirit of God, the great Inhabitant, is gone. You might have gone to that ordinance and the other, and have met with life; but now no such thing: there are the empty rooms inhabited by no one.

We should therefore so apprehend the exigence of the case, that our spirits may be awakened and stirred up, even with the utmost importunity, to obviate and avert, as much as in us lies, so great a calamity, as this, and so great a death. The presence and influence of the Spirit would stand us in the stead of a great deal of mercy of other kinds. It was supposed, that to have ministers and teachers in the church would overbalance a great calamity, where it is said; "Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers," Isa. xxx. 20. But how much external misery would it outweigh, to have this Spirit (so teaching as none does) remaining among us! So that it may well become us still to be praying, "Lord, whatever thou doest, withdraw not thy Spirit from us! Rather tear our flesh, pour our blood like water upon the ground, than cease to be pouring out thy Spirit among us!" We should make this much the design of all our prayers on such a day as this.

It may be many are come before the Lord this day, to try to deprecate and avert that wrath, which threatens us with external calamities; or that they may do something for the saving their estates, and their pleasant delectable things: but this is a low design. Rather say, "Let all these things go, if thou wilt, Lord, but let thy Spirit remain! let that breathe, and work in us still; and do with us, in all external respects, what thou wilt."

Let us labour thus, I say, to apprehend the necessity of our case. It is not necessary that we should be rich, or in quiet, or at liberty; it is not necessary we should have such and such external accommodations; but it is necessary we should have the Spirit: for they that have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his, Rom. viii. 9. And again,

2. Apprehend too (wherewith I close) the possibility of succeeding well, in our strivings and wrestlings with God, yet to obtain more of his Spirit. It is itself a Spirit of grace, and supplication; and according as it is complied with in that, which is its proper business and office, so we may expect more and more plentiful effusions of it. We are therefore to look upon this as a hopeful case, if we set ourselves to strive with God for his Spirit, that it shall not withdraw. But if it be an indifferent matter with us, then are we lost before we are aware. We feel death creeping upon us by degrees, and we regret it not; death drawing near our vitals, but we mind it not.

This is a sad case; but if we, feeling a decay and languishment, cry with importunity to God, the case is not hopeless. He hath said, that he will give the Spirit to them that ask for it; and that he will pour out his Spirit upon us. Christ represents it as given to a child, as a boon from the Father; and that this gift is comprehensive of all good things, Matt. vii. 11. compared with Luke xi. 13. Nay, that the Spirit is to us as bread to a child; for we can no more live without the Spirit, than a child can without bread.

If we would therefore set ourselves a craving in good earnest, and represent our case to the Father of spirits and mercies, his bowels would work towards us; and he would not long withhold his Spirit from them, whom he sees to want it, and ask for it. Therefore beg of God thus: "O Lord, behold a poor company of creatures gasping for life! thy Spirit is vital breath; we are ready to die, if thy Spirit breathe not. Pity thine own offspring, thou Father of mercies, and of all spirits!" Surely then this Spirit will return; for why should not we rest upon his promise, who has said, that God will give his holy Spirit to them that ask him?

And we may the more boldly ask, because we may suppose ourselves to be nearer those days, wherein there shall be a more general pouring out of the Spirit. And we might argue that those days are nearer indeed, if there was a more general, and importunate, and loud cry for this Spirit. This would import that a great measure of it is already come, and that far greater measures are coming. It would be an argument, that it would be a Spirit of consolation and joy, life and vigour; which would make religion a glorious thing, and Christians shine and live, both at once.

SERMON VI.*

James i. 22.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your ownselves.

THE limits of my time, since I intend to discourse to you only this hour upon this Scripture, will not allow me to reflect much upon the context; which is all suitable, and of the same piece with the words of the text itself. We have at the eighteenth verse a very high eulogy given us of the word of God, as that which is the divine seed and principle of the new birth; and out of which God's great and glorious work of the new creation doth result. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." Whereupon the exhortation, "Be swift to hear," (ver. 19.) is grounded; that is, be very covetous of all seasons to wait upon the dispensations of this word. And then, at last, we come to this caution here in the text; "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." Though hearing the word is the appointed means of this new creation; and is that which by divine designation is able to save the soul of a man, by virtue of that efficacy which many times accompanies it from God; yet this is not to be understood, as if it should do any such work upon them, who only give it to the hearing and no more. And therefore the apostle thinks it seasonable and necessary to give this intimation by the way, upon what terms we might expect so glorious an effect to be wrought by it: that is, supposing that we apply ourselves to attend upon it, with that earnest intention of the mind, as those who have a design to comply with, and to guide and govern their practice by the word they hear; otherwise all will come to nothing. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your ownselves."

We might recommend to you several propositions of

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divine truth from this Scripture; but we shall choose to collect and gather up all as much as we can into one, for the sake of greater despatch, which you may take thus.

That it is a miserable self-deception for any to be hearers of the word only, and not doers of it. And herein we shall speak to these three things, as previous to the improvement of it.

I. Show what it is to be a doer of the word.

II. What to be a hearer only. And,

III. Wherein those, of the latter sort, do so miserably deceive themselves.

I. We are to show what it is to be a doer of the word. The expression plainly imports a habit; according as we denominate every person that is of such or such a calling or trade, from the course and way of life which he follows. A doer of the word, (ποιητης,) is not one that doth some single act, now and then, which the word enjoins or directs, but one whose wonted course, and the business of whose life, it is to obey the dictates of this word, and who governs his life and the tenor of his actions by it. Just as we find the phrase of a worker of iniquity is in the Old and New Testament, made use of to represent and hold forth to us the course of those persons who trade in sin. They are said to be sin-makers, as the expression κακοποιοῦντες doth emphatically note: their business is to work sin; and they do often exert their strength and power that way. So we are to understand in general, a doer of the word of God; that is, one whose business of his life it is to do it in a continual course. And this supposes and includes in it many things, which I shall briefly hint to you.

1. It doth suppose a design, a formed fixed design, that this shall be my course. Accordingly we have the Psalmist speaking to this purpose; "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments: I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end," Psal. cxix. 106, 112. As if he had said, "I purpose and intend so to do; and this is an intention I resolve to pursue, throughout my whole course, from which nothing shall divert me." So in like manner, when we attend upon the dispensation of the word, it should be with a settled design in our hearts, and a sincere purpose to learn somewhat in order to practice; to apply and accommodate to practice the truths we hear, and that are capable of being applied to this purpose.

2. It carries with it a very serious applying of our minds to understand what is the mind and will of God, which is held forth to us in his word: that we content not ourselves to have heard such and such things propounded to us; but that we distinctly apprehend the scope and drift of what we hear and what is the great thing aimed at in it. For we can never be doers of the word and will of God blindly, and in the dark. It is necessary that we understand and know it first. It is a way we are to walk in with open eyes. A good understanding (says the Psalmist) have all they that do his commandments, Ps. cxi. 10. He supposes a good understanding as necessary to the doing the commandments of God. We cannot do them, without having a right understanding of them. These words do also imply (which seems to be the particular sense of them) that a good understanding will certainly incline a man to keep his commandments; and that the keeping his commandments will argue him to have a good understanding. And indeed he is the wise man that understands this to be his interest, and accordingly makes it his business to know and practice the mind and will of God.

3. It implies the use of our judgment in hearing the word, in order to distinguish what is divine, and what is human. For God hath thought fit that it should be so dispensed in the world, by such hands and instruments as may too possibly admit somewhat that is human into the dispensation of it. It is so sometimes merely as to the manner of the dispensation. There is nothing of this treasure that is conveyed to us by such vessels, but it will, some way or other, taste of the vessel: and that which we are principally to attend and mind, is to close with that which is most substantial, as supposing it to be altogether divine. It is also true sometimes that there may be some error as to the matter, as well as the manner. And there our desire ought to be of the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby, even as new-born babes, 1 Pet. ii. 2. New-born babes have a kind of discerning if the milk be pure, or if there be any thing ill tasted or unsavoury in it. And there is a certain kind of taste and relish, which belongs to the new creature. "Cannot my taste (says Job) discern perverse things?" Job vi. 30. And this was the great commendation of the Bereans, That they searched the Scriptures in order to know, whether the things spoken to them by the apostles were of God or no, Acts xvii. 11. And it was noted to be a piece of generosity in them. They were more noble than they of Thessalonica, upon this account. We are to make use of our judgment: as the apostle prays for the Philippians, that they might abound in judgment and all sense, spiritual sense; that so they might discern the things that differ, or approve those which are more excellent, Phil. i. 9, 10.

4. It requires a great deal of reverence to be used in hearing the word. So to hear it as that we may be doers, requires a very reverential attendance upon it; as considering, that this is a revelation that comes from heaven, some part of which is now to be held forth to us. It is a divine light, which, through such a medium, is to shine forth to us. And there is certainly altogether a fault in this respect, among a great many professors of religion; that the reverence is wanting, which is due to those sacred records that go under the name of God's word, and which he claims and appropriates to himself, as his word. I have wondered, I confess, to see how among scholars, and learned men, there should be so great a veneration for some or other notable pieces of antiquity, any aged volume, any old record; and how high a price and value have been put upon them. Now there is no such piece of antiquity as this in all the world that we know of. The holy Scriptures, at least a great part, are the most ancient writings in all the world. And it should challenge a mighty reverence and veneration, to have a word brought down, and transmitted to us, through so many successive ages. But to consider it as a divine word, a revelation come from heaven, doth much more claim our reverence. How strange a veneration did those Ephesians express for that image, which they were made to believe fell from heaven! All Ephesus, as it is expressed, is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter; (Acts xix. 35.) as if all the city were of a piece, all heart and soul upon that one thing, which they believed to be of heavenly descent. Now this word we are sure is a divine-breathed thing; for all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, 2 Tim. iii. 16.

Then it is that the word is like to be done, when it is received with reverence, not as the word of man, but of God; when we in our own thoughts prefix that preface to every part of that truth, which he himself hath prefixed to many parts and portions of it; namely, "Thus saith the Lord," who is the Lord of heaven and earth. It is his word, who made and sustains all things by the word of his power. When therefore we look upon this word as carrying the stamp of the majesty of God upon it, then it is like to command the heart; but it will signify little till this is done.

5. To be a doer of the word supposes that we believe it, or that our hearing of it be mingled with faith. It profits not where it is not so; and signifies nothing, if there be not that mixture. The word of God, says the apostle, works effectually in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13. But, as it is in another place, "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it," Heb. iv. 2. And it is never likely that men should practise that word, which they regard no more than the word of a child. If any one, whose truth you suspect, tell you this or that, it will signify little to determine your practice, or to guide and influence any design you have in hand. Now to receive this word with faith, is to rely upon the authority of the speaker, or him from whom it originally comes. "This is the word of God. There is no more doubt to be made of it, than whether the things be, or exist, which I see with my own eyes." For it is faith that supplies the room of sight, in reference to things that fall not under our eye. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1. "God hath said this; and therefore it is as sure as if my own eyes saw it all." The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believes; (Rom. i. 16.)

but to them that believe not, it signifies nothing, it has no power with them. Again,

6. It requires love; a great exercise of love that the heart may close with it. It is said of some, that they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved, 2 Thess. ii. 10. They had pleasure in unrighteousness. They had so much love to wickedness, that they had none for truth. Therefore they were left under strong delusions to believe lies, that they might be damned. So you find things are connected there. The love that is required here is such as works out in sincere desire of the milk of the word, that so we may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 2. Also in delight; for the soul hath a sweet and savoury relish in it. "O how I love thy law!" (Psal. cxix. 97.) says David: which was the name of that revelation of the mind and will of God then extant; and was sweeter to him than honey to his taste, ver. 103. Thy words (saith Jeremiah) were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, Jer. xv. 16. The word of God is then like to be done, when there is so dear a love to it; and the soul so taketh complacency in it, and unites to it, that it becomes, as it were, consubstantiate with the soul itself. And again,

7. It requires subjection; an obediential subjection to it, and compliance of heart with it. Receive with meekness (as it is in this context) the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls, James i. 21. There are many hearts of men so opposite to the word of God, that when they meet with that in and from it, which is cross and adverse to their corrupt inclinations, their spirits swell, and storm, and tumultuate: and they are ready to say with those in the prophet, The word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken to us, we will not hear, Jer. xliv. 16. You must then receive it with meekness; that is, so as to yield to it, how cross soever it may be to any present disposition of yours. The word has been so received by gracious hearts, when it hath spoken very terrible things. When dreadful things were foretold by the prophet to Hezekiah, he said, "Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken," Isa. xxxix. 8. Again,

8. It requires a previous transformation of the heart by it, so as that the proper stamp and impress of it be upon the soul. For the word can never be done by the hearer, but from a vital principle; of which it is itself to be the productive means. So it is said to be in the eighteenth verse of this chapter, in which is my text; "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." If the new creature be not wrought by it in the soul, there will never be that doing of the word, which is expected and required. There must be an exemplar copied out from the word upon our hearts; and then we are to practise and do according to that exemplar; still comparing it with the first idea, to be seen in the rule or word itself. You obeyed (says the apostle) from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you, Rom. vi. 17. Or, as the words are capable of being read, into which ye were delivered. That is, you were cast into the very mould of the word; and have received the stamp and impress of it upon your souls, and so have obeyed it from the heart. Our Lord Jesus Christ in his kingdom (in that part of it which is more appropriate and peculiar) rules over a willing people, and is not a king of slaves. He is obeyed with an inward inclination and propensity of heart. His power hath made his subjects willing; that is, by writing his law in their hearts, which is the great promise of the evangelical covenant. When souls are made the epistle of Christ, having his mind transcribed and written out upon their hearts; then it is they obey, and do the word, and never till then. And then it requires also,

9. A faithful remembrance of it; that is, of its rules accommodable to particular occasions as they occur. The apostle subjoins here in the words following my text a representation of a man that hears, without a design of doing, the word; who, says he, is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was, Jam. i. 23, 24. If we apply the apostle's similitude fully unto the purpose for which he brings it, it must not only have reference to such an idea, as we have exhibited to us in the word, or the representation of what we now actually are, but also of what we should be, both together. Looking into the word as into a glass, we have a representation made to us there of the new creature in all the lively lineaments of it; and so we see what we should be: and comparing ourselves therewith, we see what we are; and wherein there is a deflection and disagreement from our pattern. They that do only throw a trancient eye upon the glass, go away and forget what they see; the image vanisheth presently out of their thought. Therefore there must be a perpetual image kept up before our eyes, by a faithful and continual remembrance of what the word of God representeth to us; to wit, of the true complexion of a Christian, and wherein our own disagreeth; that so upon all occasions we may be able to correct thereby what is amiss; and to direct our way and course according thereunto. And then there must be in the

Last place, an actual application of all such rules in the word, to present cases, as they occur. Thy word I have kept in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee, Psal. cxix. 11. It is laid up in that repository and treasury for this purpose, to be used as there is need and occasion Therefore so skilful ought we to be in the word of righteousness, which hath enough in it to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished for every good work; that upon all occasions, and whatever work we go about, we may have our rule still in readiness to apply, and actually may apply it to our case; so as neither on the one hand to walk dubiously, nor carelessly on the other. For those are extremes to be avoided. A continual scrupulosity is provided against by a continual acquaintance with the word, and having rules always in readiness to measure particular cases by as they occur; and, on the other hand, carelessness is inexcusable. For many walk without having any regard to their own spirits, and matter it not whether they are right or wrong. To have this word, as the measure of our lives, to apply to upon occasion, is necessary in order to avoid these exorbitances; the one whereof is so very uncomfortable, and the other so very dangerous and destructive. But then we are,

II. To speak to the other thing a little; namely, what is it to be a hearer only? By being a hearer only, we must not understand every thing to be excluded, besides the bare external act of hearing; as if no more were intended by it, than the outward act common to man with the brute creatures: for, undoubtedly, there may be included in it many acts of the understanding, and of the outward man. So to be a hearer only, is in the general to hear without any design of doing at all. For when it is required that we should be doers, the meaning of it is, not that we must be doers of all that is bidden and directed by the word, just while we are hearing. Therefore that which is required over and besides hearing, is a design to be doing the word; while to be hearers only, is to hear without any previous design of acting according to what they do hear. Some other motives and considerations there are, which bring persons to hear; but as for the business of practice they intend it not. It never came into their minds to look upon that as the true and proper end of hearing, that they should do and practise what they hear.

Now truth is but one, error is manifold. If there be but one right end, that end is to be aimed at, which is practice. And that we may be capable of this, but one entire frame and right disposition of soul is required. But various are the ends, and many are the ill principles and dispositions, which may have place in the spirit of a man in reference to this matter. It is, therefore, a manifold character, which I might give if the time would allow, of the hearer only. For as there is a manifold end; and many indispositions, in the spirit of a man, to the true end; so manifold are the characters of such as are hearers only. Therefore we are not to suppose, that they all belong to one and the same person; but some to one, and some to another. There is,

1. The unattentive hearer; that taketh very little heed to what he heareth. We ought (says the apostle to the Hebrews) to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, Heb. ii. 1. And set your hearts (says Moses) unto all the words which I testify among you this day, Deut. xxxii.

46. He that never intends to be a doer of what he hears, will very probably little regard what he hears.

2. There is the inconsiderate hearer; that never ponders what he hears, nor compares one thing with another. I can but name particulars to you, which might well be enlarged upon. There is again,

3. The injudicious hearer; that never makes any judgment upon what he hears, whether it be true or false. All things come alike to him, he matters them not. Consideration is in order to judgment, and judgment follows upon it. We deliberate first, and then judge upon that deliberation. The inconsiderate hearer, therefore, will be an injudicious one. There is also,

4. The unapprehensive hearer; who hears all his days, but is never the wiser. Ever learning, but never comes to the knowledge of the truth. No light comes in to him, and he remains as ignorant after twenty years living under the Gospel, as he was at the first.

5. The stupid, unaffected hearer; that is as a rock and a stone under the word. Nothing ever enters or gets within the stony ground. Things are heard sometimes that would even rend all hearts to pieces, if rightly disposed; things full of terror, amazement, astonishment, and of dread; but they are heard by these without any trembling. Rocks and mountains may shake and shiver sooner than they. Again,

6. There are your prejudiced, disaffected hearers; who hear with dislike, especially those things which relate to practice: and with the greater dislike it may be, by how much the more what they hear relates to the proper end of hearing. They cannot endure such things as aim at the heart, and concern the business and work of religion. And there are again,

7. Your fantastical, voluptuous hearers; that hear only to please their fancy or imaginations. So they come on purpose to try if they can hear a pretty sentence, any fine jingle, some flashes of wit. For it may be they have found some, who have to do with this sacred word, that will allow themselves to be so vain, as to gratify them in such things, when they come with such an expectation. Of which temper I remember an ancient saying, *Dissoluti est pectoris in rebus seriis quærere voluptatem: It is a dismal token upon a person to seek for the gratification of his fancy in serious matters.* As if one would bring music to another, that lay under the torture of a broken leg; how very incongruous would this be! And such we are to consider is the state of souls, all shattered, broken, diseased, and maimed. This is the common case of those we have to do with.[a] There are again,

8. Your notional hearers; that are of somewhat a higher form and sect than the others; who do not aim merely to have their fancies and imaginations gratified by something light and flashy, but their understandings also. But it must be by some fine notion, which they have not met with before. And so they always come to learn some kind of novelty; and if they cannot meet with some new thing, which they have not met with before, they go away with a great deal of dislike, and distaste, at those they hear. With these (and they are for the most part of the same sort, and therefore we may join them together) you may put,

9. Those talkative persons; who only come to hear that they may furnish themselves with notions for the sake of discourse; or that, when they come into company, they may have something just to talk of afterwards. Upon which a heathen moralist reflects with a great deal of ingenuity. "That is, (saith he,) when they hear such moral precepts as the philosophers use to deliver, and press in the schools; as all came into them in words, so, with them, all go out in words. Which is just the same thing, as if the sheep, when they have been grazing all day, should come at night to the sheepherd, and cast up the grass they swallowed, to show how much they had eaten. Grass it came in, and grass it goes out again. The shepherd does not expect this, but expects that of the grass they had eaten that day, there should come milk and wool from the concoction and digession of what they had eaten." It is much that we have need to learn such documents as these from a heathen. What! because all we hear comes to us in words, should it all come out in words again? No, the end is surely that it should be so digested and concocted, as to yield work and fruit, agreeable to what we hear. And then there are again,

10. The censorious and critical hearers; who come on purpose not as doers of the law, but as judges. They come to see what they may carp at, and so to pass their verdict. "Were such and such things rightly methodized? such and such words well placed? was there an exact concinnity in what was said?" and the like. This now is all the design they have in hearing the word. And then there is another sort too, and we have some experience, I am afraid, of too many such, in the age and day wherein we now live, and that is,

Lastly, Malicious hearers; that come on purpose to seek an advantage against those they come to hear, particularly from what they preach. By this sort, you know, our Saviour was often pestered; who came to hear him, and to put questions to him, and so gave him occasion to speak, only to entrap and insnare him. To which may be added your raging exasperated hearers, such as Stephen's were at his last sermon; who gnashed upon him with their teeth, and could not forbear violence to his precious life, upon their hearing him. Thus you see the characters of those that are hearers only, which are various and manifold. I shall only touch upon the

III. Thing, namely, to speak to the self-deception of such persons. And here I shall show, wherein such are deceived; and the grossness of the deception itself.

1. Wherein such are deceived. And they are certainly so,

(1.) In their work. For they commonly think they have done well; and they find no fault with themselves, that they have been hearers only. And then,

(2.) As to their reward they are also deceived. They get nothing by it all this time. That and their labour are lost. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed," Jam. i. 25. But they never go away with a blessing; most certainly they miss of it, who are hearers only.

2. For the grossness of this deception, it will appear to be very great, if we consider,

(1.) That they are deceived in so plain a case. For it is the plainest thing in the world, that the Gospel is sent in order to practice. Now how strange is it, that men should be deceived in a thing so plain! What can the Gospel be sent for but only in order to practice? What other aim, or end, can it possibly have? As might be shown in many particulars, if time gave leave. And,

(2.) It is self-deception; for they are said to deceive themselves; which is a far other thing, than when the matter is wont to be expressed passively only, and in softer terms. As to say to a person, "Sir, you are mistaken; you are deceived and imposed upon." This, I say, is much gentler, than to say of a man, that he deceiveth and imposeth upon himself. For this carries in it an intimation, that men do use some industry in the matter; that they industriously deceive themselves, as indeed it must be so in this case. For if men did not use some art or contrivance, they could never have hid these things from their own eyes; particularly, that this word is sent to be the guide of men's practice. And to overlook such a thing as this all their days, (as those men must be supposed to do who are hearers only,) is miserable deception. It is their trade, and a poor trade the Lord knows! And they must be supposed to have used a great deal of artifice with themselves, to veil so plain a case as this from their own eyes and view; so as not to understand, that the Gospel is sent to be their rule of practice, in order to their attainment of a happy state at last. And now, to shut up all with a little application, we may learn hence,

a The word here, ἀκροαται, *hearers only*, may remind one (says the author) of an ancient word that is of affinity with it, namely, ἀκροαματα; of which this is the sense. It was the name of certain songs and sonnets, joined with vocal and instrumental music, which were wont to be used in the conclusion of stage-plays, wherewith the hearers were entertained at their going out of the theatres. They were also very frequently used in the close of banquets. Why! the word of God is looked upon as such an ἀκροασις, and the things contained in it as ἀκροαματα, to these [ἀκροαται] kind of hearers. "Thou art" (says the Almighty to the prophet Ezekiel) "unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words but do them not," Ezek. xxxiii. 32. Such hearers there are who come only to have their imaginations and fancies gratified with somewhat, that may be delicious to them; and that is all that they aim at. These sure are hearers only!

I. That persons are apt to overlook the main of their duty, and to take up with some lesser parts.

II. That in the very business of hearing the word, there is great danger of self-deception, if persons do not carefully watch against it. And again,

III. We may learn, that the whole business of the Gospel hath a designed reference unto practice. Be not hearers only, but doers of the word. As if he had said, Do not satisfy yourselves with merely hearing the word of God, as if there was nothing in it conducing or referable to practice, as generally the things contained in it manifestly have; for this alone is not sufficient to answer the end and design of the Gospel. Again,

IV. We may learn, that it is a duty of very great concernment to attend upon the word preached, or to be a hearer of it; for the whole business of our practice is to be consequent thereupon. It is then of great consequence to be a hearer of the word; and as much as this duty is neglected by many, the whole stress lies upon it of the design and end, for which the Gospel comes into the world. The Gospel signifies nothing unless it be believed, and this "faith cometh by hearing," Rom. x. 17. There are many persons that humour and please themselves in talking against so much hearing, and so much preaching; and think it a vain and needless thing. But that is certainly because they have little considered what hearing and preaching are for. If it were only for the minister to teach, and the hearers to learn, some new thing not known before, truly all necessary truth, by attentive diligent inquirers, might be learnt in a little while. But it is rather to urge and inculcate things, which were known before. Therefore when the apostle had said, that it is by the word of truth that we are begotten of God, to be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, he presently adds, "Be swift to hear," Jam. i. 18, 19. As if he had said, these things ought to be often urged and inculcated upon you; that so the product thereof, to wit, the new creature, may be sure in you. If this be not done at one time, it may at another; some time or other it may be effected. Therefore be swift to hear, your life lies upon it. But then,

V. And lastly, You see of what consequence it is to add doing to the hearing the word. And for that I need to give no other encouragement than that of our Lord at the close of his sermon on the mount. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them; I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. But, (says he,) every one that hareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not; shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it," Matt. vii. 24—27. And I cannot upon consideration of this but apprehend, that, as the stability of many (I hope) hath been promoted by the much preaching and hearing of our times; so there are many (I am afraid) near to a very dreadful fall, who have been hearers only of Christ's sayings, but never minded to be doers of them.

And I must needs think it strange, if we have not among us a general apprehension of the danger of losing our opportunities of hearing the word of God. We have these upon such terms, that we should, methinks, reckon ourselves always in danger. And if we have any cause for that apprehension, what in all the world can we imagine more provoking, and likely to infer such a doom and judgment upon us, as the penury of the word of God, than to be hearers only, without any design to be doers of it? Whereas if we did but set ourselves, with a more earnest design, to apply, and turn all that we hear into fruit and practice; it may be this might prevent such a stroke as we are not without reason to dread, nor without grounds to fear. But if we should not prevent it, yet it would be a very comfortable thing however in a cloudy, dark, and gloomy time, to be able to make such a reflection as this; "Blessed be God, while I had such seasons, I laboured to improve them as well as I could. I laboured to take all opportunities that I could, to hear with a design to do, to quicken and help me to move onward in Christian practice." It will, I say, be very comfortable to be able to make such a reflection in a time of gloominess and darkness which it is possible we may see, and how soon we know not. And if in such a season we should be able to make this reflection, it would be a happy provision for us against it. It would suppose us to have gotten some stock, some treasure within us, which we might draw forth. We should then have the word within us, which when we should lie down, rise up, or walk, might commune within us; and so we be capable of being preachers to ourselves.

In a word, if ever we should come to such a state of things, that we should never see the face nor hear the voice of a minister of God's word, where our lot is cast; if we should wear out our days in a wilderness, a desert, or a cave; it would be comfortable to have this word a companion to us, and ingrafted into us, which is able to save our souls: it would be comfortable, I say, to have a stock of divine truth to live upon, whether we should, as to the external dispensation of it, be in penury and want. Let these things, therefore, move us to a more earnest endeavour to be doers of the word, and not hearers only.

SERMON VII.*

Luke xviii. 1—8.

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

My purpose is not to give you a particular explication of this parable. The design of it is sufficiently seen in the application of it, which our Saviour here makes. All that I shall at present do shall be to show you, with all possible brevity, the strength of the reasoning which our Saviour here useth, from the importunity and success of this widow; in order to encourage our addresses to God, and a continuance therein without fainting. And his argument to this purpose may be seen to be very strong and cogent, if we consider these two things in the general.

First, The parity of reason between the case he argueth from, and that which he argueth to.

Secondly, The superiority of reason, which is in the latter case, above the former. For so we must understand him to argue, partly *à priori*, and partly *à fortiori*. And the strength of the argument both ways we shall endeavour to make out unto you.

First, I am to consider the parity of reason between these two cases; which you may conceive especially in these four things.

I. That here was distress in the one case, and there is distress in the other. This widow comes to this judge in a very distressed case, as it should seem, though it be not particularly expressed; only it appears she was very much grieved, and that there was a great deal of wrong done her. And so in the other case, the elect of God are always very much injured; and they sustain a great deal of wrong from this evil world, in which they are. And surely if this unjust judge was moved with the distress of this suppliant, there is a great deal of reason to suppose, that distress will be moving in this case also; and that the elect will be heard, when they make their cries to heaven, urged by their own distresses.

II. There appears to have been justice in the one case,

* Preached at Mr. Case's, September 28th, 1676.

as we are sure there is justice in the other. This widow's did appear to be a just cause. She comes with this request to the judge, that he would avenge her of her adversary. The word Ἐκδίκησόν, there used, signifies, Right me of my adversary. She came to petition a matter of right, and all that she desired was to have right done her. And there is a great deal of right in the other case also. "It is a righteous thing with God (says the apostle) to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels," 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. And again,

III. There was importunity in the one case, and there is importunity in the other. Why then should not success be hoped to correspond in this case, as well as that? This widow was so urgent, that the judge was sensible of a grievance in it; and found a necessity upon himself to do her right, lest he should be wearied by her importunity. The elect too are represented as crying night and day; that is, the loud voice of their prayers is not by fits, only now and then, but is continued, and incessant; as night and day take in the whole complex of time. And do you think then, saith our Saviour, that God will not hear their cry? Besides,

IV. There is an obligation by office to do right, both in the one case, and in the other. The person, to whom this woman applied herself, was a judge in the city. Now it is known, that in several of the more eminent cities of Israel, there were constituted stated judges, to whom all persons might have recourse, and bring their grievances, in order to their being redressed. So that this woman doth not come to a person unconcerned. She does not request that an occasional kindness might be done her; as one might request such a thing of any one, when in necessity; but she comes to an appointed person, to one who by his office was obliged to right her. And God hath been pleased to take upon himself such an office, and to make himself known by the name of the Judge of all the earth; that all might know whither to apply, and to whom they may appeal and address themselves. And why is not right to be expected in this case, as well as in the other? So far this parable gives us ground to argue from a parity of reason. But.

SECONDLY, It gives us ground also for arguing from a superiority of reason too, in sundry respects. As,—I. In respect of the supplicants in the one case, and the other; in respect—II. Of the persons supplicated in the one case, and the other; and—III. In respect of the supplication itself in the former case, and the latter compared.

I. There is very prevailing and much stronger reason in the latter case, than in the former; if we consider the supplicants in both, and compare them. In the former case you have a poor woman; and here we are to consider,

1. That she was a single woman, only one person, who comes to make her complaint to this judge; but in the other case you have a community, the whole body of the elect. How vast is the disproportion here! This great body joining in one cry, surely that must needs be unspeakably more prevailing! And,

2. (For we can but speak shortly to so many things as are before us) This was but an ordinary woman, of an inferior rank, by any thing that appears; that is, she is not mentioned here under any remarkable particular character, that might add weight to her cause and suit; but this community is a choice community; the elect; a community of very peculiar persons, that are severed from the rest of men, and distinguished by God's own special seal set upon them. As when God's portion in the several tribes was spoken of, there were sealed of such a tribe, so many thousands; and of such a tribe, so many thousands, Rev. vii. 4, &c. All God's elect ones are sealed ones; they carry a mark of honour upon them. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19. And,

3. The supplicant was unrelated to him, to whom she makes her supplication. We do not find, that she pretended to any relation to him at all; only comes to him as the judge of her city. But in the other case, the supplicants are God's elect; his own peculiar people that he had taken, and made nigh unto himself; "called, and chosen, and faithful," as you have those expressions put together in Scripture, Rev. xvii. 14. And do not we think then, that a more especial regard will be had here? Besides,

II. There is a great superiority of reason in arguing from the one case to the other, if we consider the persons supplicated; or to whom the addresses are made in each case. In the general, in one case it is man; in the other, it is God. And particularly,

1. In the former case it was a wicked profane person, to whom the address was made; one that did neither fear God, nor regard man; good to no one, neither to God nor man; a vile wretched creature, wrapt up within himself; who studied and consulted nothing but his own ease, and peace; having no fear of God before his eyes, nor any regard to man. But in the other case, you have the holy God addressed to; whose natural, essential holiness, is a perpetual law and obligation to him to do always that which is best. His essential rectitude cannot but do such things, as have an agreeable rectitude in them to his own very nature.

2. In the one case it was a merciless man, that was applied to; in the other, a merciful God. How much stronger is the reason! This judge was a man who had no mercy, no pity to any one, but to himself. He took some pity of himself indeed, that he might not be wearied out with continual clamours and cries; otherwise, it seems, his heart knew no pity, there were no bowels of compassion rolling, or working in him. But in the other case, it is the Father of mercies who is addressed, and appealed to. It is he with whom there is so abundant pity, and kindness; so strong a propension and inclination to do good to the necessitous and miserable, only because his will inclines and leads him thereunto; the Spring and Fountain of all that pity and mercy, that is any where to be found, diffused among his creatures. If parents pity their children: if there be bowels gathering in any towards the afflicted and distressed; from what spring, from what fountain did all this proceed? All must come from some original or other; and they can be derived from no higher, neither are they to be derived from any lower, than this great Father of mercies. And what! shall not he hear his elect? And again,

3. It was, in the former case, an unjust man that was supplicated; here it is the just and righteous God. As his holiness doth oblige him in general to do that, which is right and fit to be done; his justice, as a particular attribute in his general character, inclines him in this case to administer and execute justice. As he hath been pleased mercifully himself to lay down a rule and law of mercy, in reference to those that are his; (though it be impossible that God can injure a man in any thing, yet it is possible that men can injure one another; and very certain also that those are the worst used by the world, who have such a near relation to him, and whom he hath chosen and gathered out of the world;) so here in this case, when there is a proper object of vindictive justice, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right, to whom righteousness belongs as part of his peculiar glory? And then again,

III. There is, in respect of the supplication on the one hand, and on the other, a great superiority, and triumphant prevalency of reason. For, in the former case, consider,

1. The matter of the petition of this widow; and that was only a private good, that she sought for herself: and consider also the petition of the elect of God. They have all one common concernment, wherein the interest of God is involved with theirs. So that whatsoever they supplicate for, as the elect of God, must needs be a matter that is so far public; that is, wherein they all agree, and in which their hearts and desire do meet and concur. It is one thing for a particular person to desire to be gratified in some particular, private concernments; and another thing to insist upon such matters as are common to us with all the elect of God. And this it is to be supposed is the matter of the supplications of the elect unto God in this case. It is that, wherein all the elect do concentre, and wherein all their desires do meet.

2. Look to the manner and style of the supplication; on the one part, and on the other. This woman comes in her

own name, but the supplications of the elect of God run in another style; they come all in the name of the great Mediator and Intercessor. And is there not unspeakably more reason, that we should expect their supplications to prevail? They come in the name of him who is most nearly related to the Judge, and to them. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1. It is said indefinitely, with the Father; not of his, or our Father; but the common Father of him, and us, as we are to understand it. And since with him we have such an Advocate, shall we not hope to prevail? Again,

3. Consider the principle of the one's supplication, and that of the other. We must suppose this woman's supplication to be dictated by her own sense of the urgency and necessity of her case; and the unrelievableness of it by any other way than that of addressing herself to the known judge. In short, it was her own private spirit that dictated her supplication; for she alone knew her own need, felt her own necessity. But the prayers of all the elect of God have another principle. When they know not what to pray for, they are furnished with matter, and with sighs and groans at once, Rom. viii. 26. There is a spirit appointed on purpose, known by the name of the "Spirit of grace and of supplications;" (Zech. xii. 10.) whose business it is to indite requests for the elect of God, and to strive and to wrestle with him; which is strongly moving at the same time in their own breasts; so as that their hearts, and the heart of God, as it were, are united, and joined by that Spirit. Shall they not then hope to prevail? They may say, when they are putting up such prayers as are the common sense of all the elect of God; "Lord, I do not speak of myself now. Thou hast taught me to pray. This prompts me to it, and puts me upon it; and I had never prayed so, nor uttered such cries, and such desires had not entered into my heart, if thou hadst not put them there." And shall not God hear his own elect offering up petitions of his own speaking? The desires of his own creating shall not he answer? Doth he stir up desires on purpose to disappoint them? or, will he make his people refuse to pray, by denying their petitions, and casting their prayers back upon their hands? And then,

4. Consider the end of the one's supplication, and that of the other. The end that this woman aimed at, was nothing but self-advantage, to be relieved herself; but the end of the elect of God in their supplications, is somewhat wherein their interest is jointly concerned with his in reference to those great concernments, which belong to the whole body. They know he hath a concern twisted with theirs; and so can speak it, with Daniel, as the real sense of their hearts, "Do, defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name," Dan. ix. 19. This is the common sense of all the people of God; "Thou hast not been ashamed to be called our God. Thou hast taken us into a near relation unto thee. It is a grievous thing to be twitted with our God. It is as a sword in our bones to have it said to us, Where is your God? Thy concernments and ours are one; do therefore, and defer not for thine own name's sake." In this strain do all the supplications of the elect run. So that in all these respects you see there is a great superiority of reason, if such a widow should succeed well in her private request to such a judge, why all the elect of God should much more succeed in the request, which they are day and night making to the great Lord of heaven and earth. And therefore, briefly to apply all this, we learn,

I. How great a privilege it is to have this matter clear to us, that we are of the elect of God; and how much therefore we are concerned to make our calling and election sure; for then we find ourselves to belong to a community, that are continually praying prayers which shall be sure to prevail. And how great a privilege, how blessed a thing is this! Methinks when we understand how certainly the elect of God shall be heard, who are crying to him night and day; we should be at this work night and day, poring into our hearts, till we are certain of this, that we are the elect of God. Then we shall be sure to put up all prosperous and acceptable prayers, when they are all of the same sense, and run in the same channel, that theirs are wont to do. And again,

II. We are to collect hence, that the elect of God, as long as they continue in this world, are to bear the character of praying ones. To be acted by a spirit of prayer, and to have continually a praying disposition, is characteristical of the elect of God, who are gathered in from among the common refuse of a sinful world. Therefore we had need to look well to ourselves concerning this thing. How stand our hearts Godward? Are they formed unto prayer? Is it become even a spiritually natural thing to us to pray? As natural as breathing is to a living man, so natural a thing is praying to the new creature, and as agreeable. The elect are supplicants day and night. The great business of their lives is prayer. This is that, to which the heart of an elect person doth impel him; so far as he is himself, and hath the true genius and spirit working in him, which is common to all the elect of God, and also peculiar to them. And again, we are to learn hence,

III. In how wretched a case they must needs be, who are the stated and habitual enemies of the church of God in the world. It is a fearful condition that such men are in, to have all the elect of God crying against them, night and day. What will become of this matter at last? Who, that considers the case, would not dread to be found in such a condition as these are in? to be one against whom all the elect of God are joining their requests, night and day, and exhibiting complaints? For they do in common pray against the enemies of the name and interest of God; and so every one is involved, and the cry of this whole community goes against each individual; that is, supposing them to persevere in a course of enmity to the interest of our Lord, and his Christ. So that this might make any heart to tremble, to think what this is like to come to, and what it must needs infer. What fearful storms of wrath and vengeance will be plucked down at length upon their heads, against whom all the elect of God are continually joining their requests! And, in the last place,

IV. We see hence, how unreasonable a thing it is to be despondent in prayer, or to faint in this duty, supposing that the things we mainly insist upon are the common concernments of the elect of God. This being supposed, we pray securely. Indeed if we vainly and unwarrantably set our hearts upon this or that particular thing, that would gratify ourselves; and nothing will serve our turn, but that we be so and so gratified; we may pray, and pray, and all to little purpose; for there can be no acceptable prayer that is not the prayer of faith; and that can be no prayer of faith, which goeth beyond the bounds of the promise. Therefore, if I pray for that, which was never promised, I may thank myself if I succeed not.

There are some things that cannot be the matter of a universal, absolute promise; being things which are in themselves of an uncertain and variable nature; as all such things as have no intrinsic goodness of their own, but may sometimes be good to particular persons, and sometimes not. For circumstances may so vary the case, that the good that is in them may be preponderated by a far greater evil, if they should at that time be given. And whatsoever is a good of this nature; that is, good or not good, according as circumstances are, which often vary; it is apparent cannot be the matter of an absolute promise; for supposing circumstances so to vary, as that this should become an evil, you would then have evil to be the matter of a promise, which is contradictious and absurd. But since it is possible, that external or worldly good things, yea, and some also that may be externally subservient to religion, may in some circumstances do more hurt to the people of God, who does with a gracious care preside over their actions, and all things that have any respect to them, and who is best able to judge; they cannot, therefore, be the matter of his absolute promise. These things may be more hurtful than gainful, in such and such circumstances; and he sees how to do them more good by the want of such things, than by the having of them. A less good, when compared with a greater, is then to pass under the notion of evil; and it would, I say, be unreasonable to suppose evil to be the matter of a promise. And where any thing of that nature is not promised absolutely, but with a reserved latitude to the wisdom and goodness of our great Lord and Ruler; our faith can be exercised no otherwise about them, than according to the tenor of such

promises: that is, we may believe we shall have such and such things, if God seeth good; but if he seeth not good, he will deny or withhold them, even in mere goodness and faithfulness to us.

But then in such things as are absolutely promised to all the elect of God, there we may give room and scope to our faith. And it is an unreasonable thing to be at all desponding concerning the matter of such prayers: as it is, with respect to others also, no less unreasonable to admit the least doubt, that we shall have such things if they be best for us; and what God in his unerring wisdom discerns will be for our advantage. Therefore let us settle this apprehension with ourselves, of how great concernment it is to us in prayer, to insist on such things as are properly of common concern to the whole fraternity of the elect; and therein to take heed of any diffidence or distrust.

Great and glorious things are promised to be the portion of God's elect in this world, at his own appointed time and season; but he hath not told us when that shall be. However we may, with this peremptory faith, go unto God in prayer, that he will make the kingdoms of the earth the kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ, who shall reign for ever and ever, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established, above all the mountains; that there shall be new heavens, and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. But we make all this matter a private business, if we go and cry; "Oh let it be so now! let it be in my time, that mine eyes may see it!" especially if we peremptorily insist upon it; without reservation or submission to the supreme wisdom and will. Whereas if we pray in general, that such things may be; our hearts should be full of hope, faith, and joy, in the apprehension that thus it shall be; and we cannot be without success, since it is the common sense of all the elect of God.

And in matters which respect the particular concernments of our souls, see that they be things of absolute necessity, and that fall within the consent of all the community. Let us pray against the body of sin and death; that we may have grace kept alive, and maintained and improved; that we may grow, and be carried on from strength to strength, till we reach "the measure of a perfect man in Christ Jesus." This is the common sense of all the elect; and our prayers fall in with theirs, who have been wont to cry out against the body of sin and death, as the great and most violent enemy they would be rid of. We may then be sure that our prayers shall have effect, and not be lost; and that God will certainly hear them.

If we are praying for the Divine presence; he hath promised that he will never leave nor forsake those that cleave to him, Heb. xiii. 5. Whatever he may do to people in common, he will never break the bond between himself and that soul which is one of his elect; and when they cry, "Lord, never leave me, nor forsake me!" they shall be sure to be heard. When we pray for the Divine presence to be afforded more especially to us, in reference to some special case, or season of trouble and trial, this is what God will not fail to do. If his presence be desired, I say, as to any special duty; so it will be; and God will hear us.

I hope you are desirous and earnest in your prayers to God, for his more immediate presence, in reference to that special season of your approaching to the Lord's table. Sure all the elect of God have been wont to do so, praying and striving that they might at such times and seasons meet with God; that there might be a real intercourse between their souls and him (whom they love) to such a degree as to him seems best. Why, God will hear all these cries, that are common to us, with all the people of God; and such prayers being directed to him, shall not be in vain. Therefore we should take heed, upon these accounts, that we faint not.

We must know that fainting may be either when faith languisheth, or desire. It is faint praying, when we pray as if we cared not whether we prayed or no. The word ἐκκακεῖν, here rendered faint, in our text, is the same with that which elsewhere is rendered weary. Let us not, ἐκκακῶμεν, *be weary* in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not: (Gal. vi. 9.) that is, if ye be not sluggish in the course of well-doing. Take heed therefore of praying the sluggard's prayer, or at the sluggard's rate. "The desire of the slothful kills him, because his hands refuse to labour," Prov. xxi. 25. His own desires carry no life in them; they are even death to his very heart; cold things that strike death into the soul, and put no life into it.

And then, too, when faith languisheth it is faint praying. "Let not that man," (says St. James,) that is, the man who wavers like a wave of the sea, and is driven of the wind and tossed, "think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord," James i. 7. What! come to God, as if we did not expect to get any thing by God? and as if we agreed in the same sense with those profane atheists, and symbolized with them who say, "What profit is it that we have prayed to him or kept his ordinances?" go heartlessly into the Divine presence? give way to a cold, dull spirit, in the very performance of the duty; and never look after the success of it when it is over? Such had as good never pray at all, who pray only to keep up a custom, and to make a show; and that they may be able to say when all is over, "The duty is done." Let not such think they shall receive any thing at the hands of God; such especially as come to him with no expectation, and pray to him as to one that cannot save.

It is to cast infamy upon the great object of our worship; as if we were only blessing an idol, when we pray to the true, living God, as if he were such a one as the idols of the Gentiles are said to be, that have eyes but see not, ears but hear not, and can neither do good nor hurt. It is no wonder if such praying signify nothing; for it carries an affront in itself. Every such prayer is an indignity, and an insolent affront put upon the great God: as if the injunction of this duty upon the children of men, was either unreasonable and to no purpose, and so a reflection upon the wisdom of his law, who has commanded us to pray; (inasmuch as that is always unwisely enjoined that hath no end;) or, as if there were no power in him to accomplish what we come to him about, though we come according to his own direction. It cannot, I say, but be an affront to God, either way, to come to him with desponding hearts. In the former case, if our desires languish, we are worse than the importunate widow; in the latter case, if faith languish, we make God worse than the unjust judge.

SERMON VIII.*

Rom. v. 5.

—Hope maketh not ashamed.—

It will not be impertinent or unuseful to say something, from this Scripture, concerning this property of the Christian's hope; namely, that it maketh not ashamed. But let us, first, briefly consider the scope and series of the apostle's discourse here, and see how this passage depends and is introduced.

We have here, after a long discourse touching our justification by faith in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, some account of the privileges of a justified state in the beginning of this chapter. As, first, peace with God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, though our Lord Jesus Christ," ver. 1. And secondly, free access unto God, and the liberty of his presence. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God," ver. 2. In which words we have also the patient, joyful expectation of the glorious state, that was designed for the people of God hereafter. And finally, cheerfulness in a present afflicted condition, is represented by the apostle as another privilege. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, ver. 3. It was no such strange thing, that they should be found exulting in the expectation of so glorious a state, as that which Christians look for hereafter; but we have this also to say (saith the apostle) concerning our case, that we can

* Preached at Jewin-street, March 15th, 1675.

glory in tribulation too, and triumph over all the difficulties that accompany an afflicted condition. And of this, as having something of a paradox in it, and appearing more strange, he giveth the particular grounds and reasons. As,

1. The knowledge of this truth, that tribulations worketh patience, ver. 3. We are, as if he had said, well pleased, yea, and do even glory in our present afflicted condition upon this ground, that we know, by this means, that patience will be wrought out. We look upon it as a thing of very high value, that the mere hope of so much gain should make persons glory in such tribulations, which seemingly call for other affections. Tribulation is not a pleasant thing to be glorified in of it self; why then, or upon what account, is it to be gloried in? Why, upon this account, as that out of it the gain of patience shall accrue, and result to us. By this we shall have our spirits composed to a peaceful acquiescence in the Divine will, and the waywardness of our own wills shall be subdued and brought down. There is a future heaven to be enjoyed, a glorious heaven; and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of that state: yea, and there is a present heaven too involved, and wrapt up in patience. When once the heart comes to be resigned, and rest quietly and peacefully in the Divine will, this is a present heaven; and bears a great resemblance to that which is future, and expected.

2. The apostle adds, that of this patience there will be a further gain, to wit, of experience, ver. 4. As patience comes to be more and more exercised, experience will grow. And,

3. Of that experience shall spring hope, (ver. 4.) that shall reach and touch the other heaven; hope, as he had said before, of the glory of God: (ver. 2.) even such hope as will not make ashamed; and that for this reason, because (saith he) the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, ver. 5. While we find, by the Holy Ghost that is given to us, an effusion of the Divine love into our souls; while we find this love shed abroad in our hearts, and then testifying itself, as if there was an immediate assurance of heaven; this puts us out of all doubt that God will never let our hope be disappointed nor end in shame.

This is the order and contexture of the preceding discourses. And as to this passage that we have chosen to insist upon, we need not go about to vary the words, which you see are short and plain; "Hope maketh not ashamed;" only it is needful to inquire,

I. Of what this is spoken. And then consider,

II. This particular property of it.

I. Let us inquire of what this is spoken, or what it is that doth not make ashamed. It is here indefinitely said to be hope. But though it is so generally expressed, yet, it is plain, it is not meant of all hope. The circumstances of the text are sufficiently limiting, and teach us of what hope this is to be principally understood. It is hope of the glory of God; it is hope that groweth out of experience; it is hope that is maintained by the love of God, shed abroad in the soul, through the Holy Ghost given to it. It is in short then undoubtedly the Christian hope that is here meant; and whereof we find this is expressed, that it maketh not ashamed.

If you would have a more distinct account of this hope take it thus: It is that sanctified affection of a renewed soul, by which it is carried continually to expect what God hath promised, concerning its own welfare and blessedness here, and especially hereafter; notwithstanding whatever difficulties do occur in the pursuit and expectation of those things hoped for. And if you would know what it superadds to common hope, or what there is in this Christian hope of a distinguishing, peculiar nature; it superadds,

1. Sanctity. A true Christian hope, is a pure and holy hope. It engages them that have it, to purify themselves even as God is pure, 1 John iii. 3. And again it superadds,

2. Solidity. That which a Christian hopes for, is some solid substantial good thing. He hopes not for shadows and lying vanities. They who lived in the exercise of this hope, to whom the author of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks, had before them the prospect of a better and enduring substance in heaven; (Heb. x. 34.) a substance that would never fail their hope. There is a kind of hope that runs all in the chase of trifles, for the most part. Men hope for things, which they cannot have; and if they had, were to very little purpose. It superadds,

3. Certainty. Men that hope at the common rate, do but hope conjecturally; and therefore their hope often maketh ashamed. Even at present they frequently outlive their hopes, they being pitched mostly upon things that are temporary. They hope for that which is swept away like a spider's web. It is a most vanishing, uncertain hope. But if they should cast their eyes on futurity, that future happy state of things beyond time, they have no real ground to entertain any hope of it; or if their hope relate to present things, it is merely conjectural, and self-founded. God hath given them no ground for this hope. He hath not promised them, that they shall be rich; live a long life, and spend all their days in prosperity here. There is that strange kind of monstrousness in the common hope of men; that whereas a Christian hopes, because God in his word hath promised, who cannot lie; they hope, even with reference to these their greatest concernments, because they think he will lie. For if they believed that he would not lie, but that all was true that he had promised and spoken, they would be in despair; they would with respect to these concerns, have no hope at all, but the horror of despair. Besides,

4. Which is another distinguishing circumstance of the Christian's hope, every such person hath a community belonging to it. The Christian hope is common to them that are Christians, in which they all unite and meet: whereas in reference to the hope of other men, there is no such thing as a centre in which their hopes may unite and meet; and so they lie scattered, according as their own inclinations and appetites carry them. Falsity is various, and manifold; truth can be but one. And therefore says the apostle, concerning the hope of Christians, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling," Eph. iv. 4. All the hearts of Christians do run into one hope; they meet in one and the same hope, the ground of which is that they are called to one and the same state; and this call will warrant their hope, and justify it. "Why should not I hope to reach the state to which I am called? and why should not I attend to the affairs relating to that state? May not a man be warranted in things relating to his calling? This is my calling, (saith the Christian,) and I hope for and expect success." He can answer it to all the world, be the things never so great and high of which he is in expectation. They are very great things we hope for, but however to such things we are called, God hath called us to his eternal kingdom and glory by Christ Jesus, 1 Thess. ii. 12. 1 Pet. v. 10. This calling is not peculiar, or particular to persons severally; but the same unto all that are called, whose hope is one. There is a community, whose hearts, as they run one way in desire, so do their hope and expectation; and their faith too being one common principle among them, they must needs have one common hope of the glory of God. Now concerning this hope which is proper to the Christian community it is said, that it maketh not ashamed; which we are now to speak to in the

II. Place. And as to this property of the Christian hope, which we now proceed to consider, we have only two things to do:

1. To open the import of it; and,

2. To demonstrate the truth of the assertion; or to show how necessarily this property doth agree to the Christian hope, namely, that it maketh not ashamed.

I. We are to open the import of this property of the hope of Christians, which maketh not ashamed. Not making ashamed is a negative expression, denoting that those who admit or give place to this hope, and in whose hearts it lives, and is fixed, are not liable to be made ashamed on this account. Now to make out this, there must be a concurrence of several things, which we must understand to be denied by this same negation; or that do not belong to the hope of Christians. As,

(1.) Shame, as it refers to foregoing hope, implies disappointment. There may be shame upon many other accounts, but as it refers to hope, it implies a disappoint-

ment. They were confounded (as the expression is in Job) because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed, Job vi. 20. Job is speaking there allusively to a troop of travellers, or merchant men, passing through desolate countries, and expecting relief of which they fail, and meet not with. They were ashamed because of their hope; that is, because they had hoped, and were disappointed; they met not with what they hoped for.

(2.) It supposes hereupon disgrace and reproach. For shame is properly the resentment of any thing under the notion of its being ignominious, or that carries matter of reproach in it to us. We find therefore these in conjunction sometimes in Scripture; to wit, reproach, shame, and dishonour, Psal. lxix. 19. and elsewhere. Now in this present case; to have hoped, so as to suffer disappointment, is an argument of weakness, and so is apt to spread a shame over a man's face, and even to clothe him with confusion. A man reckons it a reproachful thing to him to have betrayed his impotence, want of foresight, an aptness to be gulled and imposed upon in this respect; and very shameful that he should hope with no more security. When a person has cause, and apprehends that others have also of censuring him, concerning the hope that he had, there it is that shame takes place. But this we must understand to be denied here. This hope, which the apostle speaks of, shall never meet with a disappointment; and consequently no reproach, nor disgrace, shall attend the hoper. He shall never have cause to call himself fool, because of his hope; nor shall any one else have cause or ground to call him so for ever.

(3.) Shame doth also imply our own reflection upon that reproach; or else there is no actual occasion of shame, if we do not consider in our minds, or view the reproachful thing we are to take shame for. Therefore when the matter is such as only in vulgar estimate is shameful, but is not so indeed; to fortify oneself against shame in that case, is to overlook it, or look another way. So it is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he "endured the cross, despising the shame," Heb. xii. 2. Because it was to him no shame, he overlooked it, and looked upon it with contempt. "This will be counted a shameful thing, but I mind it not." He looked another way, having his eye set upon glory. If any thing be really matter of shame, it is by reflecting on it that shame ensues. But this is denied here. In this case there shall be no occasion to pore and look on, so as that from thence matter of reproach may accrue to you that have hoped for the glory of God. Let not your hearts misgive you; you shall have no uncomfortable reflection for what you have done in this matter. As there shall be no reproach, so you shall imagine none. And,

(4.) Shame includes in it a heart-dejecting resentment hereupon. That is, a resentment seizes the heart upon this reflection, and sinks into the soul, so as to depress it, and bring it low. Shame is grief; only distinguished from other grief by this particular distinction in the object, that it is grief for a thing under the notion of its being uncomely and ignominious. But that is denied here. Hope maketh not ashamed. You shall never grieve for this hope. You shall never suffer heart-displeasure on this account. Your hope shall never leave your heart to sink, because it fails and comes to nothing.

This now is the negative import of this property of the Christian hope; it maketh not ashamed. But then there is somewhat positive implied under this too. We may fitly understand a *meiosis*, as they call the figure, in this expression; that is, when less is said than is intended or meant. Your hope, Christians, shall not make you ashamed: no, it shall make you exult; it shall make you triumph and glory; it shall raise and heighten your spirits; so far shall it be from occasioning in you a sinking or dejection of soul. This is very common, in Scripture, for negative expressions to be put with an accent, to signify some very great positive thing. Thus it is said of the Messiah, that "he shall not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;" (Isa. xlii. 3.) that is, he shall cherish and support it. Again, "his commandments are not grievous," 1 John v. 3. Here also a great deal less is said than meant; for they are glorious, consolatory, and refreshing. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace," Prov. iii. 17. This then must be understood to be the property of the Christian's hope, that it is so far from making him ashamed or exposing him to ignominy, that it ennobles his spirit; and this it does according to the nature and degree of the thing hoped for.

It is obvious to observe how the hopes of persons, by degrees, greaten their spirits from their childhood. There is in some an aptness to mind greater things, and to live at a greater rate than others. And this we call generosity, it being not a name from the descent, but from the temper of the mind. It not only shows itself by men's being descended from noble and generous parents and ancestors, (though there may be something in that too,) but when such persons as are born to greater things come to understand their capacity, and what they are born to, their hopes do heighten or raise their spirits, and lift them up above the common pitch. So that the proper spirit of a nobleman, a prince, or a king, is greater than that of a common and inferior man. And the reason is, because as he comes to understand his quality, his spirit grows with his hopes of what he shall come to; his very hopes greaten his spirit, ennoble and raise him, and make him think of living like one that expects to be in such a state, as that to which he is born. Therefore if a prince should be reduced in his infancy to that condition as to be brought up in a beggar's shed, and understand nothing of his birth; it is likely he would mind such things, as children of peasants use to do; but if he afterward come to understand the truth of his own original and descent, and what he was really born to; and withal what his capacity is, and the ground of his hope that he shall one day inherit such and such grandeur and honours; with this hope his spirit will swell, and rise, and greaten.

And such is the property of the Christian's hope. It not only makes him not ashamed; but it heightens, enlarges, and greatens the Christian's spirit, so as to make him aspire high, and to look for great things. Hence it is given as the description of them, to whom God will give eternal life, on that day when he shall give to every one according to their deeds; that they are such as, "by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honour, glory, and immortality," Rom. ii. 6, 7. To these he will give eternal life; but to those that are contentious, against the plain truth of the Gospel which should rule and govern them, will he give "tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath." The former sort who shall have eternal life for their portion, are such, whose minds, hearts, and hopes, are carried after great things; who seek for honour, glory, and immortality; who disdain and scorn this earth, and all sublunary things, and can say, "*Non est mortale quod opto*; I have something above, better than, and beyond, all that this earth can afford."

In a word, a true Christian is one that seeks that better, even the heavenly, country, (Heb. xi. 16.) so as not to stoop to this world though there were never such opportunity for gaining it; he would not go back, though he had the opportunity of going into Egypt. And all this is by reason of the hope of coming to a better country. The Christian would not go back into the world, being called out of it; though he should have opportunities for it as good as other men: no, because he is seeking a better country; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called his God. "Such are of a great, a noble, and generous spirit, like my children;" saith God. "Such are in some measure worthy of me. They discover something of an excellent spirit, heightened proportionably to those great hopes which I have set before them." And now,

2. We proceed to demonstrate this to be the true property of this same subject; which will be soon done, though we have but little time, if we do but consider these things about this hope.

(1.) Consider the Parent and Author of it. It is a divine thing, it is part of the new creature, it owes its rise immediately to the Holy Ghost; as the apostle intimates, when he says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13. Far be it from us to think, that God should beget a hope in his, that should end in disappointment and shame!

(2.) Consider the object of this hope. Christians do not

hope for creeping shadows; they have no reason to be ashamed of such great things as they hope for. They hope for the glory of God, for a kingdom that shall not be shaken, for the unseen things of the other world. Their hope entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, Heb. vi. 19, 20. A man that hath only pitched his hopes upon mean, base, low things, hath cause to be ashamed that he was such a fool to hope so; but the Christian's hope will never make him ashamed.

(3.) Consider the ground of their hope. They hope in God upon the encouragement of his truth and promise. Uphold me according to thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope, saith the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 116. Thy word is that which I ground my hopes upon; shall I be ashamed? I hope in thee, thy truth, thy power and goodness; let me not be ashamed. That prayer is as much as a promise, that he should not be ashamed. Prayer by divine inspiration is as good as a promise. The prayer is, Let none that wait on thee be ashamed, Psal. xxv. 3. The promise is expressly, They shall not be ashamed that wait for me, Isa. xlix. 23. It is true, indeed, if there were not a proportionable ground for one's hope, a man might be ashamed of his hope; as well because it is too big, as because it is too little. But if there be a real ground for it, a word of promise from that God who cannot lie; then there is no cause to suspect the matter. There is no reason why any should be ashamed, let his hope be never so high, when he hopes only for what God has promised.

Now to make some brief use of what has been said;

I. See the highly privileged state of Christians; though in this present condition of little and low enjoyments, yet their case is so good as that they shall not be ashamed. They shall have heightened spirits, their minds shall be greatened by their hopes, even while it is little that they can enjoy in one kind or another.

II. Hence consider and contemplate the different state of other men. It is not said, concerning their hope, it shall never make them ashamed. There is nobody that warrants their hope to them. The Christian's hope hath a very good warrant. I warrant you for your hope, that it shall never make you ashamed; but what have other men to warrant their hope? they have no one that undertakes to guarantee it, and therefore they are left liable to a shameful disappointment, and bitter disgrace upon that account. Yea, they are not only liable thereunto, but it is a sure and certain matter that it will end so; for their hope shall be as the giving up the ghost," Job xi. 20. We commonly say, "As long as there is life there is hope:" but their hope comes at length to the giving up the ghost, and then the man is gone. A wicked man's hope quite vanishes away; it does not remain weak, and feeble, and infirm only, but it is absolutely gone, and become nothing at all; as we have no hope at all concerning a person, when he hath once given up the ghost. Let the object of their hope be what it will, either such do hope for vain things, which are gone when they expire; or if their hope lies towards better things, it is a vain hope. If they hope not for vain things, yet they hope for these better things vainly, having no ground nor reason for their hope; and so still it perishes, and, as the giving up the ghost, comes to nothing. Or it makes them ashamed, and despised; sinks them into horror, amazement, and consternation, and so much the more, by how much the stronger was their hope. Such a disappointment is a most confounding thing; when a person expects it should go well with him, yet he perishes, and all his hope turns on a sudden into horror!

III. We learn hence also, that hope must needs be a very great thing in the life of a Christian; and a most intimate, essential part of his Christianity. It is that which holds his soul in life. This property of hope, that it maketh not ashamed, as was said before, is not to be understood as merely negative; it is that which establishes the heart; invigorates, and gives life to soul. Indeed you would make a poor thing of Christianity, if you abstract and separate this hope from it. "If in this life only (says St. Paul) we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. The most peculiar and distinguishing things in the hope of a Christian, objectively taken, are things beyond time. But if all we were to get by Christ, were to be compassed within time, then we were very miserable creatures indeed; we should make a bad bargain of it, if we had no more by Christ than what time can hold, and deal very poorly by ourselves.

A Christian lives by hope all along, from first to last. He is born to hope, begotten to a lively hope, (1 Pet. i. 3.) is saved by it; (Rom. viii. 24.) as if it had been said, he were lost if it were not for this hope. This then is the great, the momentous thing in the life of a Christian; for if it were not for this, we should sink and perish. So that if I am a Christian indeed, if I am a new creature, I must live by hope all my days. And that I may shut up all, I shall only leave with you a word or two of counsel, and caution.

1. Of counsel. Labour to establish in your hearts this hope, and maintain it; and live by, and upon it. But I cannot enlarge upon this. And then,

2. By way of caution, I add; be sure that your hope be the truly Christian hope only; that hope, whereunto you can entitle the Holy Ghost as the Author, so as that hereupon we may say, we are begotten by him to that hope. And also see to it, that it be just commensurate with Scripture grounds. That is genuine Christian hope, that measures with the Scripture, and the word of promise. "Remember (says David) thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." Ps. cxix. 49. Then you will hope for nothing, but what God has promised: and in the way, and according to the tenor, of his promise. And you need to hope for no more, for he hath promised to give grace and glory, and to withhold no good thing from them that love him, Ps. lxxxiv. 11. And what would you have more? what need your hope to range beyond that, or without the compass of this promise? But then it must be according to the tenor of his promise; for if you hope absolutely for that which is a matter only of a limited promise, then your hope would be beside its ground, and so be liable to disappointment.

And you must know there are things which lie within the promise, that cannot be the matter of an absolute hope; because God's promise, concerning them, is not absolute. As to temporal good things; outward prosperity to ourselves, or the church of God in common; there is no absolute promise of these; therefore if we hope for them absolutely, we deceive ourselves, and it is our own fault if we be made ashamed. Who bid us hope so? who bid us let our hopes run that way, otherwise than as God commands, or beyond what he has promised? We may hope absolutely for things, that are of an immutable goodness; but some things are not so, and are only to be estimated according to their end. Sometimes they will serve the end that God designed them for, and sometimes not; and when they do not, they are not good, but evil. External prosperity to the church of God, or ourselves, will not always be serviceable to the end for which it is designed by God; to wit, to make our spirits better, and more of the temper which he looks for, and approves; and he always knoweth whether it will be best for that end or no. Now if we suppose an absolute promise for any variable good things, which are sometimes good and sometimes not; then take the time when they are not good, and can they be the matter of a promise? No, sure; the promise would in that case be turned into a threatening.

This then shows the reason, why it is altogether impossible that promises, concerning external good things, can ever be universal and absolute. They are not always good, but only as circumstances are. But from the nature of the thing promised we may be at a certainty how the promise is to be understood; that is, in reference to the Divine wisdom. Such things as do appear good for us, to that unerring wisdom, in certain circumstances, shall be bestowed upon us; and if we so order our hopes, they will never fail us, for no good thing will God withhold from them that love him. But when there is a doubt in the case, whether it be good or no, there is all the reason in the world he should decide the doubt, and we should yield a matter of dubious consequence to him. But if our hearts be so set upon any temporary good thing, as that such savour more with us, than those things which run into an eternal state; this we ought to guard ourselves

against. As suppose it should be more consolatory to me, to be assured of present deliverance or prosperity, than to be told of being at the resurrection brought within the compass of his sheep, whatever troubles I meet with here: this is certainly a great distemper of soul, that I cannot taste the best, the sweetest, the most satisfying, and fullest good, more than present ease; but that any thing of earth would be more tasteful, and grateful. And this, I say, we should always take heed of; that we do not indulge ourselves in any thing, which is in itself of so very dangerous and dreadful a consequence.

SERMON IX.*

1 Thess. v. 6.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others—

I CAN spend no time in giving you a view of the context, which is very suitable to the words now read. They are a caution against security, and contain in them these two things. To wit, in the first place, a monitory prohibition of it; "Let us not sleep." And, secondly, a specification of the prohibited evil; "as do others:" which words plainly intimate that others sleeping is no warrant to us to do so. Common example indeed is apt to have that pernicious influence; but we are taught that it cannot justify us in sleeping, that others so generally, and as it were industriously, compose themselves to it. Moreover, these words signify, that others sleeping ought the more effectually to warn us not to do so. Examples that carry much of terror in them ought to strike our hearts with dread, and to possess us with a cautious prudent fear, lest we fall into the same dangerous and desperate state. It is as if he had said; "Come, let me show you a fearful sight. Take a view of the world, cast your eyes round about on every side; behold the generality of men all asleep, asleep under wrath, careless and at ease, securely slumbering while their judgment lingereth not, and while their destruction doth not slumber: be warned by so dreadful an example, not to do as they do."

The words do not need much of literal explication. Sleep is wont to be variously taken. You know what it means in the proper sense. In the borrowed sense it sometimes signifies, natural death; sometimes a quiet composure, and rest of the spirit: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for the Lord only maketh me dwell in safety," Psal. iv. 8. cxxvii. 2. Again, that is, in a moral sense, it signifies the state of sin: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 14. It denotes especially the security of such a state, with reference to the wrath and judgment of God, whether temporal or eternal; which sleep is always sinful, and in some cases penal too in some degree; for we read of a pouring forth a spirit of slumber, and a deep sleep, Isa xxix. 10. Rom. xi. 8. But we must know that the word Καθεύδωμεν, here used in the text, signifies a deeper or a more intense sleep. It is the word that is used by the Septuagint to signify the sleep of death. "Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake," Dan. xii. 2. And they use the same word to express that fast asleep of the prophet Jonah, out of which all the storms and perils of the sea were not sufficient to awaken him. As for the words *us* and *others*; the former plainly means true sincere Christians, and the latter the rest of the world: the refuse, as the word λοίποι emphatically signifies; or the reprobate, and worst of men. Two things offer themselves to us from the words,—That these *others*, the refuse, who are the most of men, do sleep; and —that God's own people by no means ought to do so. I shall speak to these two things: And,

I. Show you, that these *others*, here referred to by the apostle, do sleep; And,

II. Upon what accounts it so very ill becomes the people of God to do so too. And then, I shall make the use of both together.

I. I am to show that the *others*, whom the text means, do sleep. And herein I must premise to you, before we come to evince this point, that by sleeping is not merely meant, that they do actually for the present sleep only; as if the apostle supposed them to be but in some present temporary slumber: but we are to understand him as speaking of them as habitual sleepers; or that they are under such a sort of sleeping disease, as is resembled by a lethargy; or a caros, which is reckoned a more intense degree of that disease; a *veternum*, or dead sleep. How physicians distinguish these things, or critics, I need not stay to tell you. But the thing that is plainly meant hereby, is to represent this as the common state of the world, that it is an habitual drowsiness, such as that kin[1] of disease serves to resemble.

Now that this is the common state of most of the world we may evince to you by such things, as are usually incident to sleep, or are symptoms of a sleepy, sluggish disposition. As,

1. Forgetfulness, which has most proper reference to things past. Sleepy persons are very oblivious. So is the common case of the world. Men are forgetful of things they are most concerned to remember, and most forgetful of them. They have generally forgot that they are creatures; have forgot that with the rest of men they are lapsed, and revolted from their Creator, and become sinners; forgot that they sprung from an apostate race, and that they were children of wrath, one as well as another. Thus their strange forgetfulness of things, which one would think should continually urge them, shows that they are continually asleep.

2. Insensibleness, or stupidity, which hath reference to what is present. Persons that are in a more intense and deep sleep, you cannot make them feel without difficulty. Such as are in a caros, prick them and they do not feel. Sleep is a binding of the senses, and such a deep sleep strongly binds them. So the common case is with the world. It is a wonder of divine power if at any time their hearts are made to feel; and a thing to be recorded (as you find it is in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. ii. 37.) if any are ever pricked in their heart, though never so pungent things are spoken to them.

3. Security; or unapprehensiveness of any future threatening danger. Why, so you know the case is with persons asleep. Let the danger be never so near, as well as dreadful; if the house be on fire, if the murderer be by the bed-side, if the sword be at the breast, the knife at the throat, yet they are void of all fear. And do not we know this to be the common case with the world? Destruction from the Almighty is no terror to them. They rush with all violence upon every danger, as a horse into the battle: or are like persons in their nocturnals; who, if not hindered, would come upon rocks, precipices, or rivers, or fall into dangers that would certainly destroy them. Another thing incident to sleep is,

4. Misapprehension of all things past, present, or to come. For you know in sleep persons used to dream, and then how strangely do they misapprehend things! their heads are full of false images, or false conceptions of those things which are true. The case is so with the world too in their sleep. They can tell how to dis-imagine all the greatest realities, and turn them into shadows. God and Christ, heaven and hell, and the eternal judgment, which must determine them to the one or the other of these, are all fancies with them. But the pomp and grandeur of this world which is called fancy;[a] the business and turmoils of it, which are all walking in a vain show; outward prosperity, which is but as a dream when one awakes; these things are great realities, and with them these are the main things, and the most important. Riches and poverty, prosperity and adversity, which will be all thought fancies in a little while, are great things with these men; so aptly do they misapprehend in their dreams!

5. There is also (which is near a-kin to the last) a great unaptness to reflect upon any thing as absurd, though never so truly so, which occurs to them in this dreaming sleepy state. It is so with persons, you know, in dreams. Let things occur to them never so absurd, they never take no-

* Preached at Haberdashers' Hall, May 2nd, 1673.

a Agrippa and Berenice came μετα πολλης φαντασιας. Acts xxv. 23.

tice of the absurdity. Let them dream themselves to be in never such odd, antic postures, all is well; they find no fault with any thing they do, or is done to them, while they are in their slumbers. And so is the case with the world too. The most absurd things imaginable, are no absurdities to them. To live in this world of God's making, while he feeds them with breath from moment to moment, yet as "without God in the world;" to be concerned a great deal more to please themselves than him, as if his favour were of no importance, and signified nothing; to study more the satisfaction of their flesh, than the saving of their souls; busying themselves all their days about mere trifles; these, I say, the most absurd things that ever could enter into any human imagination so much as to think of, are yet no absurdities to them. They find no fault with this; think all is well, though this be their continued course, which plainly shows they are asleep. Those things, for which persons when awake are ready to tear their flesh, and do abhor and loath themselves for, they indulge themselves in even for a life's time making no displeasing reflections upon them all their days; never at least till they awake, which shows what their state was before.

6. It is especially incident to a deeper sleep to be awakened with very great difficulty. The difficulty of bringing them to a right mind, to the exercise of their understanding, and to apply themselves to do according as a rectified understanding would dictate, shows them to be very much under the power of sleep, since there is so much ado to awaken them. And yet nothing will serve some, who are called upon by the word of God from heaven, even all their time, and yet never awake; roused by strange thunders of Providence, many times, yet awake not.

7. Slothfulness is manifestly ascribed to such a sleepy distemper, or a listlessness to business. So it is with the world too. That which is the proper business of men, in this world they will not be got to it; they are altogether indisposed thereunto. You know how Solomon represents the sluggard, whose hands refuse to labour, and indulges himself in sleep and slumber, Prov. vi. 9, 10. xxi. 25. xxiv. 30—34. Again,

8. They are apt to show great displeasure and frowardness towards those, who attempt to awaken them. So it is with very drowsy persons, who soon grow peevish and angry if you offer to awaken them. They are ready to quarrel even with the very light itself, if it shine in their faces. Thus it is with the sleepy world too. This very light itself is as the shadow of death, and whatsoever it is that tends to awaken them.

9. And lastly, there is a constant proneness to fall asleep again, if at any time they are startled a little. Thus it is with the world. You may have here and there persons who are roused to bestir themselves a little, but presently they drop asleep again. They can hold their eyes open but a little while. And thus I have shown what is the common state of the world, these "others;" they are generally asleep. I now come to show,

II. That it ill becomes those who are God's own children, that is, true sincere Christians, to sleep as do others; namely, the refuse of the world. This will appear upon a threefold account; it holds no agreement, either with their principles, or with their state, or with their design and end.

1. It is very unsuitable to their principles that they should sleep as do others; to the constituent principles of the new creature. As for instance,

(1.) Light is a main ingredient principle in that holy frame of the new creation. New creatures are all the children of God, as God is the Father of lights. They are born light, of light. It is true, light signifies holiness; not directly and formally, but consequentially, as being potently influential and efficacious. It derives or makes an impression upon the heart which is correspondent, and agreeable to itself. The apostle tells these Thessalonians, that they are the children of the light and of the day. 1 Thess. v. 5. It is day with them. It is not only day round about them, (so it is wherever the Gospel is afforded to men,) but God hath made it day within; or as the apostle expresses it, hath shined in our hearts, 2 Cor. iv. 6. A day-star is risen there; and to lie sleeping under the light of such a day, is a very unsuitable thing. They have light whereby to discern, both the mysteries of grace, and the methods of Providence; and very unsuitable it is in both respects that they should sleep. They have light to discern the mysteries of grace; those strange and wonderful things unfolded in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which should always hold the soul in an admiring posture, for it is a marvellous light they are brought into, (1 Pet. ii. 9.) or an amazing light, as the word signifies (θαυμαστὸν φῶς.) And they have light more than other men to discern the methods of Divine Providence. The Lord's voice crieth to the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name, Micah vi. 9. There is that wisdom which is of heavenly descent, wisdom from above, by which they know what is the nature of God, and what are the ways of God, which are highly conformable to his nature, in his government of the word. It is not likely these should be asleep, when comparing things together; especially when they expect God will be doing some strange matter in the earth; though, at some times the appearances thereof are greater than at others, and things seem near even at the door. If they be so, they who have not internal light cannot apprehend it; but those who have enlightened eyes may, especially at some times, see that the providence of God is bringing it to pass. It is unreasonable then such should be asleep, who are not in darkness, lest the day should overtake them as a thief; as the expression is in the fifth chapter of this epistle and the fourth verse. And again,

(2.) It is unsuitable to the principle of life and power in the new creature. They are made to live by the most agile and noble kind of life that is in the world, and to which sleepiness is most disagreeable. They are made to give themselves unto God; as those that are alive unto him, and gotten out of death, wherein they were sleeping before. They are to reckon themselves indeed dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. 11. I might also mention those three eminent principles of faith, love, and hope, all directed to action; but the time will not permit.

2. For sincere Christians to sleep as do others is very unsuitable to their state. As in the ninth verse of this chapter the apostle observes, that God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. By which he intimates, that the refuse part of the world have the tokens on them of persons appointed unto wrath; while those who are true and sincere are appointed to obtain salvation. And,

3. It is unsuitable to their designs and ends. They who have so great things to do, as to serve and glorify God all their time in this world, and to save their own immortal souls, and to gain an immortal state of life and glory, methinks should have no time to sleep. It would be altogether unsuitable to their business to allow themselves so to do. But I cannot insist further here, and shall pass on to the use of this subject. And sundry things these truths taken together would yield us by way of inference, for our improvement. As,

I. That God's own people, and the men of this world, are two distinct sorts of people. They are *alii, atque alii*. "Let not us sleep, as do others." It would be a very useful consideration to us many times to think seriously of this matter, that there are two sorts of people in the world; and then to think seriously also to which I must annumerate myself, or to which sort I belong.

II. The people of God are a select and a saved people, the rest are a refuse people. This is plainly too held forth to us. Christians are a faithful, chosen generation, and possession; the others are not so, but are of a vile and abject sort. All indeed were naturally alike; but they who are taken out and selected, are made a very peculiar sort of people, in their habitual frame, and in respect of the permanent fixed excellencies that are in them, above and beyond what are to be found in other men.

III. The people of God are not to imitate the rest of the world. "Let not us sleep as do others." They are a peculiar and a different people from these "others;" and therefore must do other kind of things. "What do ye more than others?" (Matt. v. 47.) said our Lord to his disciples, upon a supposition, that they should only do so and so; or content themselves with going no further than the scribes and Pharisees; but this absurdity is implied at

the bottom, that for them to do no more than others were a most intolerable thing. Our Saviour there reasons *ex absurdo*, and supposes it very absurd that his disciples should do no more than others. They are not to be conformed to this world; not to run with others into the same excess of riot, though they speak never so ill of them for their singularity, 1 Pet. iv. 4. We may further learn,

IV. That it is not enough for the people of God to abstain from the positive evils of these others, but they must beware also of their neglects. Many think that they do fairly well, that they are not guilty of those gross commissions that many other men are; but do not tax themselves for being guilty of their neglects, carelessness, sleepiness, sloth, and security. But alas! we are not to sleep with others, to be omissive with them of what is incumbent upon us to do.

Well, that I may hasten to a close, this truth ought to be a akening to us all, and should put us upon rousing ourselves. What! is the world asleep about us? and do we profess to be of another sort from them, and yet sleep with them? Surely it highly becomes us to bestir ourselves, and to shake off this drowsy temper. If I had time I would show in some particulars, how pernicious and mischievous a drowsy sluggish temper of spirit is to a Christian. While he sleeps, corruption grows. "I went by (says Solomon) the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, (the sleepy person is a fool and a witless person,) and it was all grown over with thorns," Prov. xxiv. 30. Temptation prevails; "Watch and pray therefore, that ye enter not into temptation," Matt. xxvi. 41. Where there is no watching but continual sleeping, temptation carries all before it. Grace languisheth, and cannot but do so hereupon. Comforts fail, we cannot so much as taste them; much less can we fetch them from the proper objects which would afford them. While we sleep providences are unobserved. A great deal of instruction is to be got out of them, and much duty lies upon us in reference to them. But while we sleep, we take no notice of whatever God does in the world. The breathings of the Spirit also are neglected; for they do not always quite awaken, though they do in a degree. It looks to be complied, and comported with by our stirring up ourselves to meet with it. The Divine presence is hereupon withdrawn! Christ is gone! How many good times are lost when our doors are knocked at, and we asleep! Is it not often so? Duties stand for little! all most slumberingly performed! in a slight, listless, heartless manner; as we do every thing, when we are between sleeping and waking. Either there is no calling upon God, or it is to no purpose. It is a dreadful thing to sleep upon the knee. There must be a stirring up of ourselves to take hold upon God, and a watching unto prayer. With what wakeful, lively spirits should we attend at the Lord's table! but if we indulge ourselves in this sleepy distemper, so it will be even there too. Our eternal states are hazarded! Are we sure we have done all that is requisite, in order to the securing of them? If we had done ever so much, we should be the less for sleeping. While the bridegroom tarried, all slumbered and slept; the wise as well as the foolish virgins; but the wise had their oil, and their lamps ready trimmed; but the foolish had not. He comes, and then the door was shut, and they were shut out. They were not ready, they had slept away their time, Matt. xxv. 1—13. We make ourselves by this means liable to the surprisal of judgments. And is not that terrible to our thoughts, to think of being caught asleep, when God comes to plead in his displeasure with the inhabitants of the earth? I am afraid this would be the too common case among those who bear the name of Christians, and is so now while God's judgments are abroad in the world. And I wish it may not be the case of many of those, who go for stricter professors among us, to be so surprised as the old world was. But certainly it will be inexcusable in us to do so who have had such warnings. We do not know that the old world had from Noah more express warnings than we had. It is recorded as one part of his encomium, that "By faith he, being warned of God, moved with fear, prepared the ark," Heb. xi. 7. We have been warned, I do not know how we have been moved. But sure we are very much without excuse if we are without fear and care upon such warnings as we have had. For what! would we expect voices from heaven? or must God send prophets among us, or else we will regard nothing? Needs it be proclaimed, that within so many days, we and our city shall be destroyed? Surely we have so much understanding as to compare the way of God's dispensation in former times, when the case has been as it is with us; and to make a comparison between the former and the present case, in respect of wickedness and provocation! we may then see how we are to make the comparison, in respect to God's judgments.

I know there are pretences for security; and things do very obviously suggest themselves to the thoughts of many, by which they put off or prevent what there is of an awakening tendency in the judgments of God. And perhaps it may be said; "Why, to what purpose would it be for us to be so wakeful, and apprehensive of such and such fearful things coming on? we cannot prevent them by that." But that is more than you know. You do not know but that most serious importunate seeking of the face of God, jointly and separately, in congregations, and families, and closets; being much upon the knee, much with God in private; may prevent a great deal: you do not know how much it may prevent of the Divine displeasure. But if you do not by this means prevent the common calamity, is it not much to save your own soul? And though you be not hid in the common calamity, is it not a desirable thing to die accepted with God?

But if you still say, To what purpose is it? I answer, Not to that purpose, that we should torment ourselves with the forethought. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, Matt. vi. 34. This is not the meaning of God in requiring us to be watchful; nor that we should put ourselves upon the trial or use of any undue means, for the securing ourselves from external calamity. It is not, I say, to that purpose neither. But positively, we have a great deal to do, and a great deal we might do if we be awake, if we be not found asleep, when any wasting, desolating judgment comes. We may be drawing near to God. Is it not better that judgments take us near to God, than afar off? We may be entering into our chambers; we may be making our calling and election sure; clearing up our title to the eternal inheritance; labouring to get such graces in actual exercise, as are suitable unto such a time, and such a state of things; to be prompt and ready to know how to use our faith and patience; and not to be as those who know not how to use their hands, when the time for action cometh.

Finally, We may be contemplating the heavenly state; recounting with ourselves, that it is happy for us we are sure of happiness above; endeavouring to frame our hearts to an indifferency, as to all sublunary things and enjoyments, ready to lose all and be undone. These are things we know not how to digest, without preparation. And to have these things snatched away, before our hearts are loosened from them, will be the way to pluck our hearts away too. But we should be crucified to the world, and have the world crucified to us. Then we are unconcerned with one another. Dead men lie quietly one by another, give one another no more wounds. And certainly it is better to be taken in such a posture as this, when judgment comes, than to be found in all these respects altogether unprepared.

And whereas it may be said: "But why should we so concern ourselves; why should not we rest in peace and quietness? We have apprehended danger a great many times before to be very near us, but God has kept it off. He is able to keep us still." And this I am most troubled at of all, that this should be used as a kind of religious pretence for security, "God is able to keep off any threatening danger."

The doctrine is true but grossly misapplied. Did never any storm befall the church of God yet? and what! was not God as able to have kept it off then? We should consider with ourselves. Is it, according to the aspects of providence, and God's ordinary methods before, likely that it should be kept off? How can we but think there is a day coming of God's reckoning with a people of such provocations as we are? What! are we more innocent than our neighbours, weltering in blood, and in great desolation round about us? Nor do I think our danger is so much from incensed enemies abroad (for we hear of wars,

and rumours of wars among our neighbours) as from the security of our own hearts. We have not so much reason to fear their arms, as we have a slumbering spirit in our own bosoms.

But if these threatening evils be yet kept off, what are we the worse for being prepared? We lose no labour. It is worth our labour to be prepared to live or die, for good days and bad. We have been only doing what is our duty at all times. We should be always watching; for we know not when our Lord will come and call us. Therefore we have no reasonable pretence why we should indulge ourselves to sloth, and say; "Yet a little more sleep, and yet a little more." No, no; there has been a great deal too much already.

SERMON X.*

Daniel ix. 25.

—The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

That we may the better discern the reference of these words, we shall give you a very general and brief account of the contents of the chapter, which consists more especially of two parts; a prayer, and an answer thereunto.

We have first, the prayer made by Daniel on the behalf of ruined Jerusalem, and captive Judah. The occasion of which we have an account of, premised in the first and second verses of the chapter; to wit, that at such a time as is there mentioned, Daniel did understand by the books (that is, no doubt, by consulting the writings of Jeremiah) how long the desolations of Jerusalem were to continue, and that God meant to accomplish seventy years in those desolations. Hereupon he knew that the time was near expiring. There was a way opened very far, for the restitution and deliverance of this people. The reign of Nebuchadnezzar was finished; and those of Evil-merodach and Belshazzar past; Cyrus had succeeded; and having taken Babylon, transferred the monarchy (which had continued for many years among the Assyrians [a]) unto the Medes and Persians. This Cyrus is called the servant, or the anointed, of the Lord, (Isa. xlv. 1.) by whom he meant to make way for the deliverance and restitution of his people; and by that Darius also, who is mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, and who, as some conceive, was at this time a viceroy under Cyrus. [b] Hereupon he applies himself to serious seeking of God's face; and makes that prayer, which you find continued unto the twentieth verse of the chapter. From thence, unto the end of it, is

The answer to this prayer by the angel Gabriel, sent while Daniel was yet a praying. In which he acquaints the prophet with the measure and compass of that time, wherein the great things were to be done; which he now not only immediately prayed for, but which he further had a commission to acquaint him with; namely, that seventy weeks were determined for the bringing these things to pass, (manifestly weeks of years, as is the Scripture way of computation sometimes,) all which amount to four hundred and ninety years. Within the first seven of those weeks, that is, forty-nine years, the angel gives him to understand that Jerusalem should be rebuilt; namely, the street, that is, all the inward part, or the houses of the city; and the wall that should encompass it about: that after the expiration of sixty-two weeks, added to those seven, the Messiah should come; [c] and that in the last week, even in the middle of it, he should be cut off. A prophecy to which afterwards the event did so very punctually correspond, that a very noted philosopher speaking of it was wont to say, that surely that prophecy (as it was called) must have been written after the things were done.

But the words that we are to consider concern what was done within the first seven weeks, or forty-nine years; for at the beginning of that time did the command go forth for the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem, as it was said it soon should. But the work was very soon after intermitted, as is reckoned, for about three years; and then despatched in the forty-six years that followed. Unto which the Jews have reference, more particularly speaking of the temple, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" John ii. 20. As it was not a total destruction which it suffered afterwards; so it was not a rebuilding from the ground, but a restoration, which it had by Herod.

This is that which is, in short, foretold to Daniel here, in reference to Jerusalem: that though it would be a troublous time, in which such a work should be attempted and carried on; yet the work should be carried on, and completed notwithstanding. And therefore what the words do more obviously present us with and offer to our observation, is;

That God takes care for the rebuilding of his Jerusalem, so as to effect it notwithstanding the troubles of the times.

But that we may consider the matter with more use and profit to ourselves, it is requisite that we understand, that Jerusalem was capable of being considered under a twofold notion; either as spiritual, or as civil. In the former sense, by the name of Jerusalem is usually in Scripture signified the church of God; and we are not to think that this sense was unintended in this colloquy, as I may call it, or interlocution about Jerusalem between Daniel, and the great God by his angel. Neither had Daniel a reference to it in his prayer, nor God in his answer by the angel, only considered upon a civil account; that is, as it had been a great, and an opulent, and a famous city, of much account in the world. It was not, I say, upon this civil consideration, merely, that either Daniel was so concerned; or that the great God did seem so directly, and with so special a care and providence, to concern himself about it; but as it was the seat of the Divine presence and worship, and had been the throne of his glory, though he had suffered it to be disgraced to a very great degree. And therefore both Daniel in his prayer, and the angel in his answer, speak of it under the name of the *holy city*, as you may see in the sixteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-fourth verses of this chapter, in which they do, as it were mutually and *certatim* interest one another. And so the thing we have to observe and consider, is this;

That the great God doth mercifully provide and take care, that the building of his church should go on, even in troublous times.

It will be worth our while to consider this point a little. The people of God are by the apostle Paul called his building. "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are his building," 1 Cor. iii. 9. The conversion of souls is the building the church. The growth and improvement of the converted, is the building up or edification of particular souls. Such building work as this the blessed God takes care should go on; should not be laid aside altogether, even in times of difficulty and trouble, but should go on notwithstanding. For the power is greater by which God doth manage such work, than that by which he can be resisted in it; and the mercy is greater with which he is intent upon it, than to be diverted from it. If he have such work to do, who shall let it? If he will work, who shall hinder him? And

* Preached at Haberdasher's Hall, September 2nd, 1678.

It plainly appears, that this sermon was preached on occasion of the fire of the city of London, (which began September 2, 1666,) and its restoration again to its former splendour, in a few years' time. In order to illustrate some parts of this discourse, some account will be given of this affair, towards the conclusion of it, in a marginal note.

a I suppose the author means the Babylonians. For the Assyrian monarchy was dissolved, on the death of Sardanapalus, after it had stood above 1300 years, by Arbaces and Belesis. The latter of whom, who is also called Nabonassar, founded the Babylonish empire, which continued only 210 years; that is, to the time of Cyrus's taking the capital, who laid the foundation of the Persian monarchy.

b The opinion of those, whom the author alludes to, seems to be wrong. Darius, the Mede, was uncle to Cyrus, and without doubt is the same with Cyaxares in Xenophon; who both engaged, according to that author, in the war against the Babylonians. But Cyrus, who was general of the Persian army, commanded at the siege of Babylon; and took that city by a remarkable stratagem, of which Dean Prideaux gives an account, both from Herodotus, and the eighth book of the Cyropædia of Xenophon. The city being taken, the whole Babylonian empire fell into the hands of Cyrus; who, as long as his uncle Darius, otherwise Cyaxares, lived, allowed him a joint title with himself in the empire; and out of deference to him, made him not merely a viceroy, but yielded him the first place of honour in it. Nine years are generally alloted by chronologers to the reign of Cyrus; the two first of which he reigned in conjunction with his uncle, and the seven following, (Darius being dead) he reigned as the sovereign and supreme head of the whole empire.

c The author undoubtedly means, in his public character.

if his merciful inclination hath once made him intent upon it, he will never suffer any thing to divert it. His power, I say, is too great to be resisted; and so is his goodness, to be diverted from such a work.

Yea, and he not only takes care that it should be carried on, notwithstanding the troubles of the times; but also that it shall be carried on in some measure by them, or that they shall be in some sort subservient thereunto. For he so orders it, as that even by the troubles of the times,

1. His under-agents, his instruments or builders whom he employs, have their diligence so much the more quickened. Those that were employed in the building of Jerusalem, appeared so much the more eager and intent upon the work, by how much the more Tobias, Sanballat, and some others, did bend and set themselves against them in it. Yea, and,

2. By the means of such troubles too are particular souls, many times, stirred up, and made more serious and impressible; more apt to prize, and more ready to improve, all good seasons, which tend to spiritual edification, as they do occur. When the word of the Lord is more precious, when it is enjoyed upon very uncertain terms, it ought to be always so; and sometimes it is so, by God's gracious disposition. Then it is usually most savoury! then it is most operative, and doth most good! And so this work of building the church of God is carried on, not only notwithstanding, but even in some measure by, the troubles of the times. Some brief use we shall make of this, and so pass on.

I. We should learn from it not to account and reckon, that in times of trouble and difficulty there is nothing to be done, but to sit still; no further endeavours to be used, for the carrying on of God's spiritual building. Far be it from us to think so! For our own parts, we have reason thankfully to acknowledge, that it is somewhat a quiet time with us hitherto; but it is a troublous time in the world round about us; and too prone we are to stand at a gaze, as amazed persons, wistly looking round about us; and having our eyes in the ends of the earth, (as Solomon says concerning the fool,) and in the mean time to neglect our own proper work. We mind what others are doing, in their busy hurries up and down in the world; and do but little consider what we should be doing. Our own work lies still too much neglected, as if we had no such thing to do as the building up ourselves in our most holy faith; as if we had finished our work, and had nothing more remaining, nothing left us to do. And,

II. We should take heed too of mistaking our work in a time when there is so much of hurry and confusion in the world; and when things are so blundered, that it is not very easy to discern what is to be done, and what not; or what way is to be taken, and what not. There are many who are so very intent upon this or that little mean design, in reference to this building, that it very much disturbs those, who are serious and in good earnest in reference to the main of the work itself. And there are those, who think there can be no such building at all, unless it be all according to their own model; and that the building of Jerusalem is nothing else, but the building up of their own party; that they are all the church, and that none have a share and part in it but themselves. But the main things, which belong to the constitution of the church of God, must be in our eye, while we are promoting the building thereof according to our capacities, and in our several stations; and whatever tends to promote real and substantial truth and holiness, is what we should be most intent upon in this work. But then again,

Jerusalem was to be considered too under a civil notion; as it was a great and a famous city, very much favoured by Providence, and which flourished under the benign influence of it, through a long tract of time. And so we may by analogy enlarge our observation; and render the truth we observe applicable unto other cities and places, which are considerable, in some respects in the same circumstances, with Jerusalem. And the thing we have to observe, is,

That a city, or place, being ruined by its own wickedness, when it is restored, the restitution of it is owing to the fixed purpose and active providence of God, who brings it about notwithstanding whatsoever difficulties.

All this we have exemplified in Jerusalem, and it is applicable to other places. Jerusalem, you know, was reduced from the height of its prosperity and flourishing state, into a miserable ruin; and it continued in that desolate state according to the measure of time which God had appointed it. It was at length restored, repaired, rebuilt, and in a very troublous time. If you read over the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which give us the history of that affair, which the prophecy in our text refers to, you will find it was a very troublous time; and that the troubles of the time were directed in most express opposition to this work, the rebuilding of Jerusalem. There were those that bore ill will to that city, who sometimes mocked the builders of it, sometimes threatened them, sometimes stirred up the Persian princes against them, to hinder the work; representing to them that that city was anciently "a rebellious city and hurtful to kings," Ezra iv. 15. And though by this means they sometimes prevailed to have the work intermitted, yet by the favour of those very princes, some or other of them, God orders it that it is carried on, and brought to a perfect issue at last. The rebuilding of Jerusalem is enacted by a law, and enforced by other additional laws. You have Cyrus his decree; you have Darius his decree; you have Artaxerxes his decree, in the seventh year, and again in the twentieth year of his reign; if it was the same person, which I dispute not. So that by decree upon decree, is the carrying on of this work reinforced; and all by the favour of the princes of that empire, the power whereof was endeavoured to be engaged against it; and sometimes it was, in some degree, upon the solicitation of its enemies. And solemn acknowledgments hereupon are made to the great God, that he did put it into the heart of the king, to ordain and decree so and so, in reference to this affair, as you find in sacred history.

Now consider, and compare the words of the text with the event, and the matter is plain; that it was by fixed purpose, and active providence, that the affair was brought to pass. The text says expressly, that "the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." As if it was said, Let not the more formidable aspects of the times discourage you, as to the belief of this; the thing shall be done notwithstanding. And it was done.

This also affords and challenges too an application; and there are several things which by way of inference we may collect, and gather for our own use. As,

I. We have this implied, that a place or city long favoured by God, may be reduced to a very ruinous condition by its own wickedness. The rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the prediction here that it should be built again as it is expressed, does suppose such a ruin. "The street shall be built again, and the wall." What! of Jerusalem? is there a mention of building that city again? This plainly implies then, that Jerusalem was in desolation. And so it was; and we are told plainly enough how it came to be so. Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and before them Jeremiah, in their solemn confessions and lamentations, do own the cause. They had sinned, they had deeply revolted, and therefore God had brought upon them all the evils that were written in the law of Moses. So they came into that desolate state. Their city was burnt with fire, and all reduced even into an utter ruin.

And it is our business this day to consider a like case to this. You know this has been the case of your city too. The mention of the rebuilding of Jerusalem bespeaks it to have been ruined before. And you can have no occasion to consider the rebuilding of London, but it will lead you to consider the foregoing ruin of it. That is our direct business, which lies in our way to consider; but especially the causes of it.

The ruin itself is first to be considered, that dreadful ruin! In reference to the ruin of Jerusalem we find the prophet, in the name of the people of God; or we find the people of God, whom he represents, laying it as a charge upon their own souls, to remember the misery and the affliction, the wormwood and the gall, and to have their souls humbled within them. And what! can a dozen or fourteen years abolish in us the memory of such a ruin,

as that of London was? Can it be forgot how the lofty city was brought low; and how the more lofty flames triumphed over the riches, the pride, and the glory of it? The thing itself surely deserves and claims to be long remembered, and deeply considered and thought of.

But especially the causes of this desolation deserve to be considered: namely, the provoking, and the punishing cause; the wickedness of London, and the Divine wrath which was engaged thereby against it. The fury of those flames, those flames themselves were the indications and issues of the greater and more furious heat of lust, and the more intense and hotter fervour of Divine displeasure. And if it be considered, methinks it should even yet melt hearts to think, that there was wickedness more outrageous, and wrath hotter, unspeakably hotter, than those flames!

And we should have no reason to think that there was a disproportion in the deserving, to the punishing cause; if the particulars of those evils I allude to were to be recounted and reflected on. But I am afraid we are very apt to deal by the judgments of God, as we are too commonly wont to do with sermons. We hear them, and they move us (it may be, if at all) a little only for the present; and all the impression of them is soon lost and vanisheth, as if we had never heard them at all. The judgments of God are audible sermons. They have a voice. The Lord's voice crieth to the city, "Hear the rod and him who hath appointed it!" Micah vi. 9. Divine judgments are loudly audible, they have a crying voice; and it is strange that the voice of such a cry should be forgotten! that so dreadful an event of Providence should be but as a nine-days' wonder! that though the wound be healed, the scars should be worn out, and no remembrance left of it; but all returning to their former course, as if no such thing had been done among us!

But the consideration, as was said, of the thing that was done, would receive a great deal of weight by considering the doers; namely, God and ourselves. That the inhabitants of London should be, as it were, in a conspiracy to destroy London seems very strange. And yet was not that the case? How full have men's minds been of severity towards such, as they have thought, or suspected, to have been the designing instruments; but how merciful in the mean time to themselves! Every one added something to the burning; and especially every one that allowed himself in the ways of such sins, as we cannot but know are very provoking to his jealous eyes, and which God will least of all spare for, when they are found among them who profess his name.

And that it should be God's doing is never to be forgotten. That God should have such a controversy with a people, who had so long borne his name; and with a city, wherein he had so long dwelt! And yet, "shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Amos iii. 6. Are not we to acknowledge his own doing in the case? He is said to do, whatsoever creatures do; whatsoever second or subordinate causes do, while he has them in his hand, or in his power; either to restrain or let loose their inclinations and natural tendencies, as he pleaseth; though he do not prompt them to this or that thing. And again,

II. We may collect hence for our further use, that such a desolation and ruin, followed by such a restitution and recovery, is to be looked upon as an argument of the Divine displeasure not prevailing so far as unto a total rejection, and abandoning of such a people, or such a city. There was great displeasure against Jerusalem, and the breaking out of that displeasure into such a judgment and vengeance as came upon it, was indeed very formidable, if you consider that alone. But if you consider the promise, that "the street and the wall shall be built again," and that notwithstanding the greatest difficulties that troublous times may lay in the way of such a work; this shows it was not a displeasure to a total abandoning that city. And we for our parts have reason to acknowledge the Divine goodness in this, and that mercy hath been remembered in judgment: that there has not been upon the ruin of this city such a curse or malediction, as was that of Jericho; "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that raiseth up and buildeth this city of Jericho! he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it," Josh. vi. 26. We have reason, I say, to bless God that he has not so cursed us. And,

III. We may collect further, that much less is such a ruin (when by the Divine favour it is followed with such a restitution) to be looked upon as an argument against our religion; against the religion of our people, and our nation. Some might perhaps be too apt to make such an invidious interpretation and comment upon such a piece of providence; but the following issue of things is some refutation good enough for such an argument. And it was the occasion of Saint Augustine's writing those twenty-two books (as he himself testifies) concerning the city of God; that there were, in his time, such conceits and apprehensions, upon such a like event that happened to a famous city. For the Goths having invaded Rome and sacked and ruined that city; the pagan enemies, of that time, had an apprehension among them, and talked it commonly, that this ruin was fallen upon Rome, upon the account of its having become so much Christian, as it was at that time. It was the design, I say, of all those books to contend against the folly of such an opinion as that; at least this was the occasion of Augustine's writing them, and that design is carried on very much throughout them. And again we may note,

IV. That it argues a very favourable divine providence, when God does fixedly purpose, and effectually bring it about, that a city so desolated should be restored and raised again. God's hand ought to be acknowledged in the raising, as well as in the ruin, of such a city. Both were indeed alike strange as to our case. Before that desolating judgment came, in whose thoughts was it? who suspected such an event? As before that judgment came upon Jerusalem, that calamitous state and desolate judgment which befell that city, you find it said, "Who would have believed, that ever an enemy should have entered within the walls of Jerusalem?" So who would have believed that such a calamity was approaching as that of London's fire before it came? that all the power of this city should not be able to withstand the fire at first; but that it should diffuse, and spread so universally, so irresistibly; who, I say, would have thought it? And who would have thought that it should have been so soon raised up again? and how much besides, and beyond expectation was it![d] As in reference to Jerusalem, who of those, who beheld it in its ruins, would have thought or hoped that they should again with so much joy behold Zion the city of their solemnities, and see Jerusalem, as before, a peaceable habitation? When God doth things not looked for, they ought to make the greater and deeper impression. When he bestows unexpected mercies, he

d For the illustration of this and some other parts of this discourse, it may not be improper to give the reader a short account of what the author here alludes to; I mean, the ruin of the city of London by fire, and its sudden and wonderful resurrection again from its ashes. Of which surprising events many of our historians have given us a very pathetic account; though possibly some of my readers are not much acquainted with them, and consequently will not be able to read this sermon with equal pleasure and advantage.

The dreadful fire, so often alluded to, began on September 2nd, 1666, near the place where the Monument now stands; by which one of the noblest and most magnificent cities in the world was turned into ashes in a few days. A raging east wind, we are told, fomented it to an incredible degree; which in a moment raised the fire from the bottom to the tops of the houses, and scattered prodigious flakes in all places, which were mounted so vastly high into the air, as if heaven and earth were threatened with the same conflagration. The fury, as an English historian observes, soon became insupportable against all the arts of men and power of engines: and besides the dreadful scenes of flames, ruins, and desolation, there appeared the most killing sight under the sun, the distracted looks of so many citizens, the wailings of miserable women, and the cries of poor children and decrepit old people, with all the marks of confusion and despair.

The inscription on the famous pillar or monument, erected by that celebrated architect, Sir Christopher Wren, in memory of this calamity, tells us, "The fire with incredible noise and fury destroyed eighty-nine churches, among which was the cathedral of St. Paul; many public hospitals, schools, libraries, a vast number of stately edifices, thirteen thousand two hundred dwelling houses, four hundred streets, &c. The destruction was sudden; for in a short time the same city, which was seen in a flourishing condition, was reduced to nothing: and after three days, when the fatal fire had in appearance overcome all means of resistance and human counsels, by the will of Heaven it stopped, and was extinguished." This was a sight, as Dr. Calamy observes, that might have given any man a lively sense of the vanity of this world, and all the wealth and glory of it, and of the future conflagration of the world itself.* I shall only add, without inquiring into the causes of this dreadful calamity, which the author has hinted at, in one part of this discourse: that all persons, as Echard tells us, were indefatigable in the great work of rebuilding, and making provision for the resurrection of this city: and that Sir Jonas Moor having raised Fleet street, according to the model appointed; from that beginning the city grew so hastily towards a general perfection, that within the compass of a few years it far transcended its former splendour.

* Abridgment of Baxter's Life, vol. i. p. 314.

expects impressions of deep and lasting gratitude; such impressions as are not to be worn out. For what! will we refer all these things to chance? or to mere human industry? Is it by a casual concurrence of accidents that such a thing as this is brought about? With respect to a particular house it is said, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," Psalm cxxvii. 1. And will we disinterest God in so momentous a work as this is, the restitution of such a city? And again,

V. Take both the ruin and the restoration together, and we have mighty incentives and strong obligations to study more the pleasing of that God, and keeping of his gracious presence, who must be our keeper; the keeper of you, and your city. We read of a certain city in Italy, whose inhabitants chained the statutes of their gods to their particular stations; upon the apprehension they had of how great concern it was to the weal of their city to keep their deities among them, or that they should not be deserted and forsaken by them. I need not trouble you with the particular occasion of it. But,

God is only to be held and kept among us by bands of his own making; by his own covenant and his own promises, by which he is most strongly held, if we do not make a violent rupture ourselves, and break off ourselves from him. But it is much to be feared the Divine presence is little coveted, or desired; and it little appears that God hath a dwelling in many of the new-built houses of this city, where men little concern themselves whether they have God with them or no. How many families are there, who, after so monitory a judgment, and after so obliging a mercy, yet call not upon the name of the Lord! or wherein that wickedness dwells, which will not permit him a dwelling there! Is this just dealing, that when he provides you houses, you will not permit him a dwelling there? He furnisheth your habitations, and you spoil his. We find mention made of a people, who say unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" (Job xxi. 14.) and yet he filled their houses with good things. Ungrateful and unworthy wretches! He fills their houses with good things, and they bid him begone. But, as it follows there, "the counsel of the wicked is far from me," ver. 16. Let it be far from you also. That vile temper, that wretched disposition of heart, far be it from me! Let not my soul enter into their secret; into the secret of those, who have the heart so to requite the Lord! I only add, in the

VI. And last place, that such a ruin, and consequent restitution, are no assurance to such a place or city that it shall never be ruined again. Let us so far improve the instance of Jerusalem here. Upon such a prayer so solemn, and many a prayer besides offered up by spirits wrestling and deeply engaged about this business, here comes a gracious prediction and promise; to wit, "I will favour Jerusalem, the streets shall be built again, and the wall, and the work shall be carried on, let the difficulty be never so great, and the contestation against it never so high and earnest." Why, one would have thought Divine favour had been now so fixed to Jerusalem, that it should never have been off more. But how much otherwise was the case! Jerusalem suffered many a distress after this rebuilding. For after this it was harassed much by the Grecians, Syrians, Parthians, and the Romans; and by some of these several times. And last of all it was taken, and so dreadfully ruined, (I mean the destruction brought upon it by Titus,) that ever since one may go (as once was said of another place) and seek Jerusalem in Jerusalem, and all in vain. But God forbid that this should be the issue as to London! God grant that it may never be so! that the prevailing and growing wickedness of this city (for it seems to be growing) may never bring things to that pass, as that one may as vainly go to seek London in London.

SERMON XI.*

Psalm lxvii. 2, 3.

That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

I TAKE it for granted, it is generally known that it is by public authority recommended to us, this day, to celebrate the praises of God, for the preservation and success vouchsafed to his majesty's person and forces abroad: and particularly, that God hath protected and guarded so precious a life, amidst all the dangers and deaths that threatened it in the siege of Namur; and given success to the design of taking that fortress.

And whereas the proclamation by the lords-justices appointing a thanksgiving on this day in reference to these great things, takes notice; that this protection of the king's life, and the success of his forces in that great undertaking, is justly to be looked upon as an answer to prayer, especially the prayers of that day of fast, that was appointed and observed in the beginning of the summer, with relation to this year's expedition: I do accordingly, at this time, intend to consider the second verse of this psalm, in connexion with the third: as I did on that fast-day consider it, in connexion with the first.

The words of the proclamation are to this purpose; "That whereas they did appoint a general fast to be kept through this kingdom, for imploring the blessing and protection of Almighty God in the preservation of his majesty's sacred person, and prosperity to his arms, both at land and sea, which hath been observed accordingly; and forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his infinite goodness, in answer to the prayers humbly and devoutly offered up to him, to grant to the forces of his majesty, and his allies, so great success in the taking of the town and castle of Namur: they do therefore, adoring the Divine goodness, appoint this day," &c.

Now, according to the observation that is justly made here, that God hath made the event to correspond so far unto prayer, I have, as hath been already said, determined to insist upon the second verse in connexion with the following, which run thus; "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God! let all the people praise thee." Whereas on that day of public fast, I considered the second verse, in connexion with the first; the words of which are these: "God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

It was with this design that such mercy was petitioned for; or that God would be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. Which expressions, relating to a community of people, and their public affairs, import favourable aspects of Providence upon such a people, and such affairs; and that such requests were made, and such mercy supplicated for from heaven, with this design, that God's way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations. As this was the end and design of prayer, so the prospect, the expectation, and hope hereof, is made the great inducement, as well as the spring and source of praise. And what we aim at or seek for, is, that all people may every where praise God; that all nations may be glad and sing for joy, because he will "judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth."

By the way of God we are to understand, the course of his economy in governing the world; but especially (as the expressions connected with it show) as it refers to the salvation of men. What our translation reads in two words, "saving health;" is but one in the Hebrew text,

* Preached September 8th, 1695.

This sermon, it appears, was preached on September 8th, 1695: being the day appointed by public authority for a general thanksgiving, particularly for taking the strong town and citadel of Namur, in Flanders, by King William: which place, as Bishop Burnet tells us, was so happily situated, so well fortified, and so well furnished, and commanded, that it made the attempt seem bold and doubtful. Namur had been taken by the French about three years before, in the view of a great army; which was looked upon as one of the greatest actions of that long reign. But though the fortifications, both in strength and in the extent of the outworks, were double to what they had been, when the French took the place; yet King William, after a short siege, retook that important town and fortress, in the view of a hundred thousand French, commanded by the famous Marechal Villeroy: which, as the fore-mentioned historian says, was reckoned one of the greatest actions of the king's life; and indeed, one of the greatest in the whole history of war.

salvation. And we know that from the same word comes that name Jesus, given to the great and eminent Saviour; who by a known and elegant metonymy, is hereupon again and again in Scripture called God's salvation. And judicious expositors understand this to be the highest intendment and ultimate meaning of these very words; that Christ, and God's design of saving sinners in and by him, may be more known in the world. And therefore, taking the foregoing supplication as I now state it, connected with the resolved duty of praising God, and the invitation of all to a general concurrence herein; and we have a sufficient ground for that observation, which I shall now recommend to you as the theme and subject of our present discourse,

That our souls should be greatly enlarged and highly raised in praising God for successes, and for favourable aspects as to our public affairs, from the hope, that thereby divine knowledge may more generally be diffused and spread in the world. I shall, in speaking to this,

I. Briefly show you what I mean by divine knowledge.

II. Show you, that such means as are here intimated; to wit, the successes and favourable aspects of providence, with relation to the public affairs of such as profess the name of God, and design to serve his interest in the world, have a tendency to the spreading of such divine knowledge among men. And,

III. I shall show, that the hope and expectation hereof is a very proper, and should be the principal, spring of our praises for such successes, and favourable aspects upon our common affairs. And so make application of all, as time will allow.

I. I shall briefly show you, what is here intended by divine knowledge. That is truly called such knowledge, whose object, and whose author, and whose nature are divine. And such I mean that to be, which I now speak of; and shall open to you in the terms of the text.

1. For the object of it; namely, God's way, and his salvation. The way of God, as I told you, is his economy, or course of dispensations in governing the world. And that takes in both religion and righteousness together, objectively considered; the knowledge of the true religion, and of all that men do mutually owe to one another. And we find that both are intended here in this context. That the general spreading of religion and righteousness is designed and aimed at, (with the desire and expectation of which the Psalmist's heart is so much taken up,) you may see from the seventh verse, which concludes the psalm. "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." This shall be the consequence of his saving us; his giving us success, or his making his face to shine upon us; that is, that as he blesseth us, men shall more and more be induced to bless him. That expression, "the fear of God," is, you know, a paraphrase of true religion: not only religion in general towards God, but even such religion as hath its foundation in Christ, the Saviour and Mediator between God and men. And this seems to be here intended in the words of the text, "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." There can be no such thing as religion in the world at all, which is not founded in the hope of mercy, as the spring and fountain; and of final felicity, as the end, that all shall result into at last. There could be no more religion upon earth, than in hell, if there were no hope of salvation. Men would but have the religion of devils, or fear God with a fear of horror. For the devils are said to believe there is one God, and tremble, (φρίσσουσι,) that is, gnash their teeth for horror, James ii. 19. They tremble to think there is a power superior to them, which they cannot overcome; and that will take a just and eternal revenge upon them, for their insolent rebellion and wickedness.

It is then the knowledge of God's salvation, that giveth a rise and spring to religion; and without this, there can be no such thing as true religion in the world. But then also, that righteousness is comprehended within the compass of the object of this knowledge, as well as religion, appears from the same context; "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth," ver. 4. As God, by the dispensation of the everlasting Gospel, requires and teaches us to live righteously, as well as godly; so doth that knowledge, which he ingenerates and worketh in the minds of men, (wherever that teaching is efficacious,) produce righteousness towards one another as well as religion towards God. Both these I take therefore to be comprehended together, in the object of this knowledge; and so far it is divine. And,

2. It is divine also with respect to the author of this knowledge. The promise in the new covenant, which God said he would make with his people, and which is the connective bond of all that are his people indeed, is this; that they should be all taught of God. The passage is quoted from Jeremiah, chap. xxxi. 33, 34. by the apostle to the Hebrews; chap. viii. 10, 11. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest." And indeed if that were not designed and meant, we could not give a reasonable account, why this should be made the matter of request and supplication to him, that his way might be known upon earth, his salvation among all nations. But though this is a knowledge to be taught and given by God himself, yet he useth means in order thereto. But by how much the more overpowering his influences are, and by how much the brighter and more penetrating his light is, in begetting this knowledge, so much the less doth the instrumentality of the means appear herein, and God is seen in it so much the more. And then,

3. The nature of this knowledge, as well as the object and the author of it, must be understood to be divine too; inasmuch as it is plainly intimated to be efficacious and transforming knowledge, so as to make the subject like the object; that is, so as to make men appear like so many representations of God himself in this world; with respect to their holiness towards himself, and mutual love, equity, and righteousness one towards another. This is the meaning of his writing his law in their heart. For whereas his law is all gathered up (as it is by our Lord himself) into this double summary of loving God with all our hearts and souls, our minds and strength, and loving our neighbours as ourselves; to have this divine knowledge, in truth and reality, is to have it so efficaciously operative, as to transform the very soul into this twofold love; and so accordingly to frame this world and the minds of men every where into compositions of love towards God, as the supreme good, and towards one another, in obedience and subordination to him. And this is that divine knowledge, which the text and context do manifestly intend. But,

II. We are to show you how successes, and the favourable aspects of providence, relating to the public affairs of those who profess his name and espouse his interest, tend to propagate such knowledge as this in the world: that is, according to the expression in the text, to make it universal, so as that God's way may be known in all the earth, and his salvation unto all nations; and that true religion, and the fear of God, may take place unto the utmost ends of the earth, according to the conclusion of the psalm. And when we behold God in such favourable aspects and appearances, how much does the hope revive, and rise in our souls, that this shall be the final issue of things! namely, that God shall be thus known in all the earth so as to be every where worshipped, and subdue the nations of the world to his equal, mild, and merciful government. I shall proceed here by these two steps:—1. I shall take notice to you, that we have a great deal of reason to hope for this end; and, 2.—That we may observe an aptitude in such means to subserve it.

1. We have a great deal of reason to hope for this end; as a thing, which God ultimately has in design, and will effect. We find several unaccomplished, prophetical scriptures of this import, as that "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas," Isa. xi. 9. And so operative will be this knowledge, that besides the impressions of religion which it shall make upon the souls of men God-ward, it shall also impress a universal peaceableness and righteousness upon men's

minds, towards one another; so as that men shall generally agree to "beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isa. ii. 4. Such will be the powerful efficacy of this Divine knowledge, that it shall transform the world into love and kindness, benignity and goodness; as God himself is love, and the supreme and all-comprehending goodness.

And we see also a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, which hath a more particular reference unto Christ: "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth" (unto victory it is read in the New Testament, Matt. xii. 20.) "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law," Isa. xlii. 1—5. How far we are concerned in that I shall not insist to show; though many have made their observations upon that expression of the isles waiting for his law, and applied it to these islands that lie so near to one another, and wherein we are so much concerned. This however was a thing to be gradually done, but withal it was to be certainly and surely done; namely, that judgment should at length be set by him in the earth. This expression plainly imports the universality of the effect, and not as if it were this or that single spot, to which such an effect was to be confined; though, in strictness of speech, if it were any where known in the world, it would be known or set in the earth. But that cannot be the design of the expression as it is generally explained; but that the earth in general is to be the subject of this great effect: and the expressions, though they are wont to be applied to the case of particular souls, yet they have a more diffusive applicableness, which is not to be overlooked. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." A *meiosis* is acknowledged in these words; the meaning of which is, that he shall be so far from bruising the reed, that he shall strengthen it; he shall be so far from quenching, that he shall more and more inflame, the smoking flax. This, I say, besides its being particularly applicable to the case of individual persons, must be understood also to have a general reference to the state of the Christian interest. That though it be low and languishing, and many times like a bruised reed, or a little smoking flax, where the fire is ready to expire and go out, yet it shall not be. That bruised reed shall grow stronger, and that smoking flax shall be blown up into a flame; and so will go further and further on, till the effect shall measure with the earth, and have no other confines and limits than that; till he shall set judgment in the earth, and have wrought that general transformation in the world, that all eyes shall see the salvation of God.

And when we are told in the book of Daniel (ii. 45.) of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that should become a mountain and fill the earth; I think there is nothing in any time or age hitherto past, that can answer the import of such a saying as that is. This is a work yet to be done, and therefore yet in great part to be hoped for; that that stone Christ, Christianity, his religion diffused, and spread among all nations of the earth, by an almighty Spirit poured forth upon all, shall be so great a mountain, as to measure with the world, and to fill all the earth. But I know nothing as yet done, that answers the import of so great a word of prophecy, as this is.

Moreover, we are told that upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet (which most agree hath not been sounded yet) all the kingdoms of this world are to be the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, Rev. xi. 15. And this will be in answer to what was predicted long before, in the second Psalm. Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession, Psal. ii. 8. So that as to the end we have a great deal of reason to hope for it, which I proposed to represent to you in the first place.

2. We may also discern an aptitude in such means, as we speak of, to serve this end: that is, when there are favourable aspects of providence upon those that espouse the interest of God in the world; in opposition to the irreligion, the anti-christianity, and the unrighteousness, that obtain therein, and too generally take place. By the consideration of several things that concur, you may discern an aptness in such means to serve this end. As consider,

(1.) That the minds of men do naturally sink into atheism, or irreligion and a deep oblivion of God, when things run on in one course and tenor with a still, uninterrupted stream. Nothing is plainer, or more obvious. Because, from the creation of the world to this day, the course of nature hath been so constant, steady, and uniform; therefore men have been apt to say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. iii. 4. And so when the series of providence is generally equal to itself, or because men have no changes, therefore they fear not God, Psal. lv. 19.

(2.) God hath himself declared, that in such a case as this he will be known by the judgments which he executes, Psal. ix. 16. And when they are judgments of such a kind, as to ensnare men in the works of their own hands, (to use the following words,) and when men's violent doings are turned upon their own pates, the Lord is then known by the judgments which he executes. I know not the Lord, (said Pharaoh, Exod. v. 2.) neither will I obey his voice; but by judgment upon judgment, and plague upon plague, he made him know him before he had done with him. He could at length say, "The Lord fighteth for Israel, against the Egyptians," Exod. xiv. 25.

(3.) Men are more confirmed in their atheism, or in undue thoughts of God, (which comes upon the matter all to one,) when the course of providence seems to favour unrighteousness; or to run counter to a righteous cause. Then it is that they say, "God hath forsaken the earth; and if there be any God at all, he is surely a God that taketh pleasure in wickedness; he liketh our violence, our injurious and wrongful dealing to mankind; and even to them, who call themselves after his name." Thus because judgment, upon men's works of that kind, is not speedily executed, therefore are the hearts of the sons of men fully set in them to do evil, Eccles. viii. 11. For they say, "Tush! God seeth not, neither is there any knowledge in the Most High;" as such men are brought in speaking in the tenth and ninety-fourth Psalms: that is, this is represented as the sense of their hearts, which to him, who reads the sense, immediately impressed upon the mind, is equal to speaking; for he doth not need that they should put it into words. God reads it as it lieth there. But then,

(4.) When the course and tenor of providence in these respects alter, it tends both to revive and rectify the notions of God in the minds of men; I mean, when it alters so as to animadvert upon manifest and palpable unrighteousness and iniquity in the world, and to favour a righteous cause.

This, I say, tends to revive the notions of God in the minds of men; for every body, in his distress, is apt to think of God. There are certain *semina*, certain principles of natural religion in the minds of all; which, though some take a great deal of pains quite to eradicate, yet they can never quite do it; nature is too hard for them: but those principles that they cannot extinguish, they make a shift to lay asleep. Lust is too strong for light. A propension to, and a resolution of, being wicked, are for the most part victorious, generally governing in the minds of men; so as that the truths they hold, they hold in unrighteousness, Rom. i. 18. But affliction, and the cross rencounters of providence, revive the sleeping principles of religion; which are bound up in a torpid and stupifying state. Men begin to bethink themselves, when they find themselves in perplexity and distress. And when the wise man in Ecclesiastes (chap. vii. 14.) bids us in the day of adversity to consider, he speaks according to the natural tendency of the thing; because there will be a greater aptitude in the minds of men to consider, when things are adverse to them, and run quite contrary to their inclination. And,

The notion of a God is not only hereby revived, but in some measure rectified too. They, who before thought God did countenance their way, now find, that this was a

weak, infirm argument, and that it proves no such thing. They cannot now any further satisfy themselves, that that Deity (which they cannot altogether disimagine) is favourable to unrighteousness; but that if there be a God, he is such a one, to whom right and wrong are not indifferent things. They begin, I say, to apprehend so now.

An ungodly frame and disposition of spirit had obtained, to a very great degree, amongst Joseph's brethren; but when they meet with a series of cross providences, these remind them of their unrighteous dealing with their brother: the thoughts of which had slept with them long, but now they revive; and they now begin to return to a right mind concerning that very matter. But what comes nearer our case is that Assyrian tyrant,[a] who had been so long the plague and pest of the world, and wrought such a destruction among the people of God. When providence came to animadvert upon him, and he lay under God's rebukes and frowns, he fancied himself a beast; and became like one, by the power of his own imagination, (as that is most likely to be understood,) till he was capable of understanding, that the Most High did rule in the kingdoms of men, and give and dispose of them as he thought fit, Dan. iv. 17. And as I noted to you before, Pharaoh would not know God, neither obey his voice to let Israel go, after a series of cross providences following one another; till at length he saw himself surrounded with waters, that gave a safe passage to the Israelites, but a continual threatening and terror to him and his army; but when he found their chariot-wheels taken off, he cried out, "Now we must all fly, God is fighting for the Israelites." Then he bethought himself of a God, who did not like such a course as his was of oppression and tyranny, over a people more righteous than himself.

Not that we are to think, that successes and favourable aspects of providence are themselves, and considered apart, a measure of right and wrong, in the world. That can by no means agree with what we have supposed already. There are the greatest variations of providence imaginable, but there cannot be variations of what is right and wrong: for what is right, always will be right; and what is wrong, will always be wrong. But supposing that a cause be in itself manifestly righteous on the one hand, and unrighteous on the other; (which may be known by other measures,) then providence falling in with that which in itself is apparently right, revives and strengthens the apprehension of such a Deity, as approves of that which is right and equal, and disapproves the contrary. And so it tends at once, as I proposed to show, both to revive and rectify the thoughts of God. And hereupon,

(5.) The great commotions of nations, when the world hath been long before in a deep dream, and a drowsy sleep, taking no notice of God that rules the world, and governs the kingdoms of men: when, I say, there are great agitations; collisions of interests, and concussions of nations; nation dashing against nation; if in this case an apparently righteous cause receives countenance, and is under favourable aspects from heaven, God comes to be a great deal more thought of in the world than he was. He is then also thought to be such, as indeed he is; a God who takes not pleasure in wickedness, nor approves of unjust or unrighteous practices, though he may have forborne, and spared those for a time that used them. But further, when hereupon the thoughts of God are revived, and rectified in any measure in the minds of men, they become so much the more susceptible of superadded revelation from him; such as that which is contained in the Scripture. For it is to no purpose, when the world is generally atheistical, and have either buried the notion of a God, or perverted it, so as that to think there is a God, or that there is none, is all one with them; it is, I say, to little or no purpose for men to go up and down among such persons, in such a state of things, with a Bible; for they disbelieve such a kind of Deity as that book reveals. But if the thoughts of God be recovered and rectified in the minds of men, they are a great deal more susceptible of superadded revelation from heaven. And especially,

(6.) If that revelation be, as that of the Gospel is, a revelation of grace. For when God hath discovered himself by terrible things; being displeased with the wickedness, the atheism, the irreligion, the unrighteousness of men in this world; if then there be a discovery of his reconcileableness, of his willingness, or readiness to be at peace with the world; in what a preparation may the minds of men be supposed to be to receive such a doctrine, as that of the Christian religion! a discovery of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Do but observe, therefore, that method of representing the great Christian doctrine of the Gospel, of free justification by faith in Jesus Christ, which the apostle takes in the epistle to the Romans. He begins it with the discovery of the general wickedness of the Gentile world, and afterwards of the Jews. As to the former he saith, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, Rom. i. 18. And what is all this for? It is all to prepare and make way for the revelation of grace. We have proved, saith he, both Jew and Gentile to be under sin; and therefore that there can be no such thing as reconciliation to God and acceptance with him, but it must be by the intervening righteousness of another. And so nothing, in the way of means, doth so dispose the minds of men to receive the Gospel, as when God, in the methods and course of his providence, doth appear terrible against wickedness, the impiety and the injustice of men: nothing, I say, in point of means can be a greater preparation for the diffusion of the grace and light of the Gospel, and the more ready and successful spread thereof. And I add,

(7.) That by such favourable aspects of providence upon them that espouse God's interest in the world, the great obstructers of the progress of the Gospel come to be debilitated, and that power of theirs weakened, and retrenched; by which they opposed to the utmost the diffusing of religion, and the spreading the knowledge of God: making it their business as much as possible to extirpate that religion, which godly souls do so much desire to see spread in the earth. When the providence of God doth animadvert on such, as make it their business to destroy true religion out of the earth; so as that instead of its being known in all nations it shall not be known any longer in their own, as far as it is in their power to exterminate it:[b] when such, I say, are animadverted upon, every eye seeth how this tends to prepare, and make way for, the freer diffusion of the Gospel light and knowledge among men. For they that would do such a thing as root out true religion out of their own nation, to be sure would be far from letting it spread in the rest of the world; and, if it were in their own power, there should be no such thing in the world at all. Thus it appears that favourable events to those who espouse God's interest, tend to remove obstacles out of the way to the diffusion of true religion, and to promote the propagation of it in the earth. I therefore come now to show, in the

III. Place, That the hope of this issue and end should animate mightily our praises, and be the principal ground of thanksgiving unto God for such successes and favourable aspects of providence upon them, who espouse his interest in the world. This might be many ways made out, and indeed by such means as are most evident in reason, and most intimate to the very essence of religion. For in plain common reason it appears, that the creature is not to be his own end; much less are we to suppose, that God doth such and such things for the creature as his end. He that is the first, must be the last in all things. He that is the author of all things must be the end of all things. All this is plain to common reason. And if you go into the deeper inwards of religion, which are nearly allied to genuine and rectified reason, nothing is plainer, than that this is grounded in those great things of religion, which are most essential to it. Self-denial, for instance; I do not pray to, nor praise God upon my own account, so much as upon his. For if I be a Christian, if I be a disciple of Christ, I am taught to abandon myself, to nullify myself, and all interests and designs of mine, further than as they fall in with his, and are subservient thereunto. It is that which best agreeth with that great essential principle of all religion, the love of God, which is the noblest of all. By how

a Nebuchadnezzar.
b The author alludes, I suppose, to the late French king's repeal of the edict of Nantz a few years before, and the terrible persecution of the protestants in his kingdom.

much the more I love God, by so much the more is my heart raised in praises, when I find events to happen that have any tendency to promote his glory; and to make him more known, feared, loved, and honoured in the world. And, to speak summarily unto this matter, do but consider these two things; which we may superadd to all the rest.

1. That we ought to praise God for mercies, for the same reason that we pray for them. But we are not to pray for them ultimately for ourselves, but for God; that they may serve the interest of his glory, and be the means of diffusing the knowledge of him in the earth. It is not a real glory that can be wrought out for him; but it is manifestative glory; which stands in his being known and acknowledged by his creatures, the works of his hands, and so much the more by how much the more general it is. I have said we are to give thanks for mercies, upon the same terms that we are to pray for them. And how we are to do that, we are taught by that method of prayer which our Lord himself directed; in which the first thing petitioned for, is, "Hallowed be thy name," Matt. vi. 9. And that God may be glorified, is the thing which is to be first in our eye and design. It ought to be so in our seeking mercies from him; and consequently it ought to be so in our rendering acknowledgments and praises to him, for his kindness and mercies. And again,

2. We ought to praise God for mercies, for the same reason for which we are to apprehend he bestoweth them. But it is plain he bestoweth them not for our sakes, but his own, "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel," Ezek. xxxvi. 32. "I do not do these things on your account, but for my own name's sake; that my name may be known among the heathen, and that the world may more generally acknowledge me to be God."

And according as things have this tendency and design, so let our praises be directed, this day, upon the same inducement, and from this same spring; namely, the hope that God's ways shall be known upon earth, and his salvation unto all nations; and that the present favourable aspects of providence will some way contribute hereunto, as they have this tendency and design. If we do not consider the matter so, we disparage our own victories, when we should give thanks for them; we make them little and inconsiderable, and upon the whole matter to have nothing in them. For abstracted from the subserviency in such providences to the interest of God, and religion, and righteousness in the world, I pray what have they in them? All goeth for nothing, and will be as nothing in a few years. We cannot say that any thing is truly and rationally valuable, that runs not into eternity; that hath not a look towards an everlasting state of things, and the interest of that kingdom that shall never end. When the world passeth away, and all the lusts thereof, they who do the will of God abide for ever, 1 John ii. 17. It signifieth very little to particular persons whether they be rich, or poor, for a few days, here in this world. And it signifieth as little to nations, whether their condition be opulent or indigent; whether they be under oppression, or in a state of liberty; it signifieth little, I say, when it is considered, that these are replenished with inhabitants made for eternity, and an everlasting state of things, and who must shortly pass into that eternal state. Nothing is really, or upon rational accounts, valuable with them, but what carries with it a signification of good, in reference to eternity. So it is to a person, so it is to a nation, and so it is to this world and all the inhabitants of the earth.

Therefore, while we praise God for the favourable aspects of his providence, which have such a tendency as this, generally and indefinitely considered, let us bring down this to the particular case before us. If we apprehend much is not done toward this great end, by this particular instance of a favourable providence, yet consider this as a part, and as a step to more. And in order to excite our praises the more, to heighten them, and raise our spirits in this duty of praising God, let us, I pray, represent to ourselves the contrary state of the case, even as to this particular thing that we praise God for; namely his preserving the life of our king. What, if we had been to mourn for the loss of him! A strong hold hath also been taken, which a potent army came to relieve. Suppose the armies had fought; suppose the army that came to the relief of Namur had been victorious; and suppose there had been a total destruction of our own; think what the dreadful consequences would have been! when, instead of having the knowledge of God to spread further in the world, we should have had violence and tyranny in the height thereof deluging Europe! and threatening a deluge as general, as such power could extend unto! What hope could we have left to our posterity, that they should long enjoy that Gospel, which we enjoy; or profess that religion in peace which we profess in peace and tranquillity? I say, do but turn the tables; and consider what our case had been, if it were stated in a direct contrariety to what it is. There are many more things which I might have said, by way of particular use of this subject; but at present let us call upon God for a blessing upon what hath been now spoken.

SERMON XII.*

Joshua xxiv. 20.

If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

Some few things I shall offer to your notice, by way of introduction to what I intend from this portion of Scripture. As in the first place,

That the good which God had done this people, he was confessedly the Author of it. He not only was really and indeed so; but he was owned and acknowledged to be so. There was not a doubt in the case. It was a thing taken for granted, and which every one would own; that all the good which had been done to them, proceeded only from him, who is the Author of all good. And again,

That the good which he did for this people was very peculiar, such as he had then done for no people beside. He gave his testimonies unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; he had not done so to any people, Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20. Moreover,

That the peculiarity of his favourable dispensation towards them was resolvable only into good pleasure. No other account could be given of it, why he should be so particularly favourable to that people above other people, than, as our Lord says in another case, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matt. xi. 26. And lastly,

That though the destruction threatened unto one people, so and so offending against goodness and mercy, doth not import the certainty of such an event, in reference to another people, offending in the like manner; yet it imports the case of such a people to be very insecure, and that they are liable to the same destructive severities and consuming judgments, as if they had been the people immediately and directly threatened. I say they are liable, and cannot reckon themselves entitled to an immunity from such destructive judgments.

These things being premised, the ground of our present discourse will lie thus: That the good which God hath, of mere good pleasure, and in a peculiar distinguishing way, done for a nation, leaveth them liable to consuming judgments, if they grossly offend God, and generally revolt from him. In speaking to this, I shall,

First, Give you the state of this truth, generally, and indefinitely considered. And then,

Secondly, Speak unto it with special application to our own case, and the state of things among ourselves.

First, I shall give you the state of this truth, as considered more indefinitely. And therein,—I. Shall consider that good, which God may be supposed to do a people, of his own good pleasure, and in a peculiar way; and—II

* Preached at Silver-Street, November 5th, 1695.

Their liableness unto his consuming wrath, upon the supposition here put; that is, if they should grossly offend, and generally revolt from God, or rebel against him.

I. Let us consider the good, which God may be supposed to do such or such a people, out of mere good pleasure. And here we shall consider, in what respects he may be supposed to do a nation good, and also upon what accounts.

1. In what respects. And for this we shall take our measure from what we find, even in this very chapter, in reference to the people of Israel. The chapter, you see, begins with a large narrative and rehearsal of what God had done for them; and it is well worth your notice and observation. You must consider, that the time of Joshua's leaving them was now at hand. He was apprehensive of it, and therefore gathers the princes and heads of the tribes to him on purpose to take a solemn leave. They had been under his conduct by Divine appointment; and, as their general, he had led them into that good land, which God, by promise and oath to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had entitled them to as their seed, and now conferred upon them. He was apprehensive of the state of their case, after his departure; knowing well the terms upon which God had put himself under such bonds and obligations to them. Therefore he gathers the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for their elders, their judges, and officers, who presented themselves before God. Upon which he begins his narrative of what God had done for them; and in what particular respects he had favoured them, and done them good. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac."

Joshua here begins with that which was the most observable thing, and was first in the Divine eye and intention; namely, his making this people a plantation of religion, when the world was generally overrun with idolatry and wickedness. He puts them in mind how God did select and sever the head of this people from the rest of the idolatrous world. As elsewhere the history acquaints us with his calling him out of his idolatrous family, saying, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee," Gen. xii. 1. And we are told that, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went," Heb. xi. 8. This is the fit posture of a devoted soul, and so inwardly had God touched his spirit, that he should upon his call readily answer him, and not dispute the matter, nor say, "Lord, must I go I know not whither? and into that state, and in that way I know not?" No, faith formed his spirit, not for disputation, but obedience. He obeyed, and went. "Here am I, thy ready prepared instrument; do with me what thou wilt." And that which God designed to do, was to make him the head of a religious people; among whom he would be known, when so gross and general darkness had spread itself over the rest of the world. This was the main and principal thing in God's design; and with this Joshua begins this narrative; and then continues it in showing in what ways, and by what gradations, God pursued the design which he had so graciously laid in favour of this people; out of whose line the promised seed was to arise, in which, at length, all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.

But, in the mean time, the more special notices of God were to be confined much within the limits of this people, or them that should be proselyted unto them. "In Judah was God known, and his name was great in Israel," Psal. lxxvi. 1. And whereas this was finally a design of grace, the rest of the narrative showeth, how Providence did work in subserviency to that design; to multiply this people, to keep them entire, and unmingled with other nations: till that seed should spring out of them, in the appointed season, in and by which there was to be so universal a diffusion of blessings through all nations.

Therefore, the workings of Providence are recounted afterwards, in subserviency to this design of grace, till he comes to show how by a succession of wonderful works, in a continued series, God had conducted them from Egypt (where they were oppressed, and multiplied at once) through a wilderness, where they were under his more immediate care: till at last, according to promise, they were planted in Canaan; the type of that heaven, into which the antitypical Joshua, our blessed Jesus, was to introduce all that should be adjoined to him as the great Captain and Prince of their salvation.

2. As we have seen in what respects God did thus do good to his people, so we may also see upon what account. And this matter is capable of being resolved into nothing else but the Divine good pleasure. It was upon such terms that this people were formed at first. The Lord did not set his love upon you, (said Moses,) because ye were more in number than any other people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, Deut. vii. 7, 8. And why did he love them? why did he so peculiarly favour them? The matter resolves itself; he sets his love upon you, because he loved you. Divine love, which is the original love of him who is the Fountain of goodness, is its own reason; for there can be nothing former to, or higher than, the first. And the same thing Samuel takes notice of after they were become a formed people. The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people, 1 Sam. xii. 22. How came you to be made his people? Nothing can it be referred to, but that he was so pleased whose people you are. And that he makes the ground why he would never forsake them, in respect of their external constitution, otherwise than upon such terms as he himself did express before, even when he took them to be his people. Of which more hereafter.

And when their state was to be restored, after its being lost in great measure through their defection and revolts from him, it is still upon the same terms. He would indeed gather them again, re-collect them out of the several nations into which for their defection they had been scattered. But why? Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel; but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went, Ezek. xxxvi. 22. So that still the matter is resolved into Divine pleasure and goodness itself, the prime import of his name, as he himself proclaimed it to Moses; The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Exod. xxxiv. 6. And so much concerning the good, which God may be supposed to do for such a people indefinitely considered.

II. We are next to consider the liableness of such a people, notwithstanding, to more severe, and terrible, and even consuming judgments in case of their general revolt from him, and rebellion against him. This we see plainly exemplified, in the course of God's dispensation towards this people. And we are here to consider, that whatever good he did for this people, it was but according to free promise; and that such promise was made, with a reserved liberty to make use of his own right to vindicate himself, when, by injurious wickedness, the design of all that goodness is frustrated, and perverted, as much as in them lies.

1. It is plain, that whatever good he did for this people, was according to free promise. But that is more than can be said of other people. They had such promised peculiar favours, as no other people ever had. That is, they had that good and rich country, which they possessed, given them by immediate grant from heaven, which no people under heaven ever had the like besides; and a promise ratified and sealed by solemn oath, over and over, unto their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose God he declared himself to be, and the God of their seed; by which he obliged himself to do them good in this respect, by planting them, as a distinct people, in a rich country; where they should have all the accommodations that were needful for answering the ends for which he would have such a peculiar people in this world. And though what he did for them was thus according to promise, yet,

2. In the very tenor of that promise he reserved to himself the liberty of animadverting upon their wickedness;

and of making a way (as he sometimes expresseth himself) for his wrath to break in upon them, till at length it came upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 16. So that when any such destructive judgments should befall them, they could not pretend to be surprised; it was nothing but what they might expect and look for, even by the express tenor of that very grant, by which they held what they did before enjoy. And thus they were foretold it should be, as you may see if you look into the course of God's treating and stipulating with them. "It shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul; that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season," &c. Deut. xi. 13. All suitable blessings are, upon that supposition, promised to them. But it follows; "Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them: and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit, and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you," Deut. xi. 16, 17.

Now according to the tenor of this word of his, which you may meet with in multitudes of other places, was the course of his actual dispensation towards them. For see how things were, between God and them, after Joshua's decease. He had seen them planted, and settled in that good land. And we are told that "when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people of Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua; who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel," Judg. ii. 6, 7. But now, Joshua being dead, we find soon after, that "Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them; and they were greatly distressed," Judg. ii. 11—16. And afterwards, in the residue of this second chapter of Judges, is the summary given us of their deportment towards God, and of God's procedure towards them, under all the several succeeding judges, that governed them, till the time they had a king set over them by their own choice. Whereas before, their government was designed to have been an immediate theocracy; that is, they were to have lived in all points under the immediate direction of God himself. But they affected to be like their neighbours, both in civil and religious respects; and so God, having, in his first grant of special favour to them, reserved a power of doing himself right upon them, managed the course of his dispensation towards them accordingly.

And this we may take for an account of the state of this case, more indefinitely considered; forming our idea from what we find exemplified in this people. Great things were in a peculiar way of favour done for them; yet we find all this did not exempt them from the terrible severities of vindictive justice upon their revolts from, God, and rebellions against him. I come now,

SECONDLY, To consider all this with application to our own case, and the state of our affairs; in which application two things must be considered.

I. A commemoration, with great thankfulness and gratitude, of the good which God hath done for our nation, in a continued series and course of dispensations, through a long tract of time. And,

II. A representation, notwithstanding, how vain an imagination it would be that we are thereby exempt from a liableness to vindictive and consuming judgments, in case of a gross and general revolt from God, and rebellion against him. Of these two parts this application shall consist.

I. We are to make a thankful commemoration of the great good which God hath done for our nation even in a long continued course; as he did for that people, who have given us the ground of our present instruction And here we are concerned to say as we find the prophet speaking; "I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us; and the great goodness towards the house of Israel (we may say towards our England) which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses," Isa. lxiii. 7.

And here we may go back a great deal further than Joshua could, at this time, in recounting God's favours towards Israel. They were not then of that antiquity. He had not so long a tract of time, as we have to reflect and look back upon from their beginning to be a people; that is, the time when God took Abraham out of his father Terah's idolatrous family, to make him the head of a people among whom there should be a plantation and nursery of true religion, from age to age, till the fulness of time. It was but a few hundreds of years, of which Joshua puts them upon the review; when he calls upon them to reflect upon and look back to the years of former time. We have a far longer time to reflect and look back upon. Ours is a country severed and distanced, as you know, from the rest of the world;

Et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos,[a]

and we are at so remote a distance, that it is to be reckoned among the miracles of providence, that the Gospel and Christianity should visit our island so soon.

It is true, the history of so early times is so much the more uncertain; but such as it is, it makes Britain to begin to be Christianized even in the first century, and as some have reported, by the ministry of Joseph of Arimathea, who had been under the ministry of our Lord himself, as the Teacher come forth from God, John iii. 2. And though afterwards this island of ours was invaded, first by one pagan, then by another; still Christianity kept its footing, so as never to be extinct. And when at last the Romish apostacy and corruption had spread itself, here did more ancient primitive Christianity contend long against it; and with that steadfastness, and earnestness, that they found it impossible to make proselytes, without making martyrs, even in those early days. And after a more general night of popish darkness had spread itself over this land of ours, (then unhappy indeed, as the greatest part of the Christian world was,) the dawnings or renewed light were earlier with us, than with a great part of the rest of Europe, where the reformation has obtained. We may count above three hundred years backward, wherein there was most express opposition among us, by the bright light which then shone against the worst of the popish abominations. And when that light was grown brighter and brighter, unto a more perfect day; by what wonders of providence has our day been prolonged, and the light of it extended for so long a space! With how indulgent an eye has Heaven watched over us to prevent the return of that enchanted night and darkness, out of which we had escaped! what designs have there been prevented from time to time, to bring us back again under both a darkness and a bondage worse than Egyptian!

And it is admirable to see and take notice, how Providence hath signalized the very seasons of our deliverance from those dark and horrid designs, which have been set on foot against us; that he should also twice put such marks upon such a year, and such a day; upon the year eighty-eight in one century after another, and twice upon the fifth of November in the same century; and at length draw two ancient mercies to meet together, as it were, upon one day, and in eighty-eight. This seems to be an artifice in wise Providence to accommodate itself to our unapprehensive and less retentive minds; that he should so mark out for us times and seasons, that when such a year, and such a day, reverted, we might recollect ourselves and consider, and also those that shall come after us: "Oh, how hath God signalized these days, by special favours and kindnesses to England! and all aiming at one

a Virgil, Bel. i. 67.

mark, that is, to keep us safe from that popish delusion, and all the abominations which it sheltered, that he had before delivered us from; that we might not be brought back again, and return into so dismal, so gloomy, and so imbondaged a state."

And it concerns us to bethink ourselves as to this our last deliverance, now seven years ago, the fifth of November, 1688; in what a state of things we then were, and how our matters stood when a Divine hand was reached forth towards us, to pluck us out of the gulf into which we were sinking. We are to consider in how prepared a posture all things were for our destruction, as to our most principal concerns; those especially of our religion, than which we are to count nothing more so. The providence of God ordered us the view of our danger; not that it might overtake or oppress us, or end in our ruin, but that it might excite in us so much higher gratitude when he should deliver us. That is, in the course of providence he let it come to pass, that we should be under the power of a popish prince, intent to promote his own religion: that things should proceed so far, as that we should see mass-houses set up, even in the very metropolis of England; in this very city, Jesuits' schools opened; colleges in our universities seized, to serve the same purpose; and an Irish army brought into our bowels, easily to be assisted, if there should be occasion, by a French one; even when we knew how strict the confederacy was between those two princes, and by what methods the latter, to wit, the king of France, had been labouring to reduce all that were under his government to one religion, namely, that of popery.

And where are they now that dispute whether a Providence governs this world? Is there no specimen, no appearance of a Divine hand in this? That all the while that mighty French monarch was gradually springing up, until at length he should appear on the public stage with so aspiring a mind, as to think himself capable of giving law and a religion to all the world beside; as if he was not only greater and more potent, but wiser too, than all the rest of mankind, and a better judge of religion: I say, that while he was gradually springing up to this pitch, God should be forming his own instrument to appear upon the stage too, when it should be most seasonable? A prince, in such circumstances, and with such inclinations too! formed, and fitted, and placed on the stage, on purpose to give check (and we hope mate too) to that ambitious one, who made it his business, and doth still make it his business, to enslave, not only the bodies, but the minds and consciences too, of all to whom his power can reach and extend itself! is there, I say, nothing of a Divine hand in all this? We know indeed what extraordinary, unlimited power could otherwise have done; but God uses to work by ordinary means. And if he had not marked out this way, if he had not raised up such a one, if he had not had this in his councils; to wit, "While that prince is gradually springing up, whom I design to be a just scourge to a wicked European people, I will have one that shall spring up by degrees at the same time, that shall prevent his being more than a scourge, that though he shall chastise yet he shall not destroy." I say, If God had not done so, by way of opposition to those horrid designs that were on foot; we might suppose it as probable a means for any of us to repel the inundation of the sea by our breath, as by any other means in view to have prevented a universal deluge of the greatest calamities and miseries, all Europe over, that could be thought of or imagined.

And if there be a Divine hand eminently appearing in all this, and in a way of favour, if God hath been doing us, and the nations about us, good; all this ought to be acknowledged with the most grateful mention, and with hearts full of thanksgiving. For, consider, what if this had not been? Then had there nothing been in view to prevent our case, long before this day, from being like theirs, who professed the protestant religion in France, and in Piedmont. We might come nearer home, even to Ireland; which though we look upon it as a firebrand plucked out of the fire, yet we should consider that and ourselves as firebrands, not plucked out, but consuming in the fire, till we and our religion should have been reduced to nothing. If we would urge our own souls to a grateful commemoration of the goodness God hath shown, and the great things he hath done for us; we should, I say, state the case so as it would have been, if these things had not been wrought, and done for us.

Think then, what would have been our case! to be dragooned out of our habitations, our estates, and our families; out of our religion, our consciences, and eternal hopes, if we had not patiently comported with the former, to save the latter! And whereas the case of our brethren in France was such, that they had some refuges, some retreats, and knew whither to go; yet if the overflowing calamity had deluged all, us as well as them, whither should we have fled? what retreat should we have had?

Think we with ourselves, how many peaceful years have gone over our heads! Think too by what miracles of providence our state hath been preserved these several successive years! seven years past, and how much more than seven might we look back upon! One valuable life indeed (most valuable! and of precious savour) hath been plucked away from the throne; [b] but the other is preserved: and by how slender a thread doth so great a weight hang, and depend, as our visible all! How strangely is that life preserved from year to year! so as that after every campaign, we have, as it were, a king given us anew, as by a resurrection from the dead. Through so many surrounding deaths is he kept, and still from time to time returned, and brought safe back again to us; whereas the continuation of such a thread by moments, hath so great a weight hanging upon it, that if there had been an intercision, as there might have been in a moment, it is inexpressible, yea inconceivable, what miseries might have come upon us. Though, as was said before, we are not to measure or circumscribe Omnipotence, but we are to speak and judge of things according to the appearance which they carry to our view; who are not expected to judge with the judgment of God, but with the judgment of men, of what is obvious to our notice. And upon all these accounts we have cause to own, even with the most sincere gratitude, that God hath all this while been doing us good, and has done it of his own good pleasure, and in very peculiar kinds and respects. But then, I must come to the

II. Part too, that I may be just to the truth and to you, to show how vain a thing it would be (though we are obliged to acknowledge, and indeed to own it with the greatest gratitude, that God hath been all this while doing us good; yet, I say, how vain it would be) thence to conclude ourselves secure from destroying judgments, and consuming wrath; if still we grossly revolt from God, and generally offend against that goodness itself. And to this purpose let us,

1. Cast an impartial eye upon our own provocations; and see what matter for Divine displeasure there is to be found among us. Certainly there is what may equal that of this people, who are our present exemplar. It may be some may say, "We are not for serving strange gods, as they did." But pray, how many are there who are for worshipping no God at all! Set the atheism of the one against the idolatry of the other. And were the Israelites for worshipping strange and false gods? O, what multitudes among us are there, who cannot be supposed to be less guilty for their slight and careless and trifling worship of the true God; while they acknowledge and own him in all the perfections and excellencies of his being, which exalt him far above all blessing and praise! who come to worshipping assemblies with as slight minds, as others carry with them to the play-house! O, what provocation is there in this! How provoking is their wickedness, who deny the Lord that brought them! who contend even against his Deity itself, his All; who is to us our All in all, and upon whom our eternal hopes depend! How horrid is it to consider the gross immoralities that shelter themselves among us under the abused and usurped Christian name! So that the justice, the honesty, the temperance, the veracity, which were to be found among pagans, should be, from time to time, produceable to rebuke and shame us for their contraries, which we allow ourselves in, while

b Queen Mary, who died universally lamented, December 28th, 1694; in the 33rd year of her age.

we call ourselves Christians! Are not these high and great provocations? And then, let us hereupon consider,

2. What pretence have we to think ourselves secure from vindictive severities, or that wrath should not come upon us, even until it consume us, after God hath done us so much good? Is his doing us good, or his having done us good, any security? Pray let us weigh some considerations with reference to this.

(1.) How was it any security to the Jews? Do not we find, notwithstanding all the good which God had done for them, that yet there were times and seasons when their armies were routed, that they could not stand before their enemies? When their ark, in which they gloried, (that peculiar symbol of the Divine presence,) wasmade a captive to their enemies, and ravished away from them by paganish hands? Was there not a time, when notwithstanding all the good which God had done them, the Assyrian power sacked and enslaved their country, and they were carried away even beyond Babylon? Did all the good, which God had formerly done them, protect their country from invasion; their great city, which was the glory and praise of the earth, from being plundered and ravaged; their temple, one of the wonders of the world, from being turned into a ruinous heap? Again, let us consider,

(2.) Can we pretend any antecedent right to any of those favours, by which our state is distinguished from others, who have been most miserable round about us? Can we pretend any better right than the Jews had? They had a right by promise, we have not a right so much as by promise. Did God ever promise us that we should have peace in our own bowels, when the nations round about us should be involved in blood and ruin, and this for seven years together? This people had what they enjoyed by promise; but so conditional, so limited, as not to be a bar against such vindictive judgments, as did actually befall them; but we have not so much to say as that. We have no such prior right to our enjoyments, as that we can say, if such and such judgments should befall us, God would do us wrong; that if he should let our houses be burnt, our goods rifled, and ourselves come under oppression, bonds, tyranny, slavery, we should be injured, and wrong would be done to us by the common Ruler of the world. Dare any of us be so hardy as to say so? If we should, that alone would be provocation enough to bring the utmost of Divine severities upon us; for we can claim no such right without invading his, who is the common Lord of all. And again,

(3.) Let it be considered, whether it is not very apparent that God hath done us all that good, all the while, which we have been the continual subjects of. Was it not all from him? Is it not he that protected our peace and religion hitherto; and kept off from us calamities and miseries, wherein others are involved? If we should deny that God hath done all this for us, even that itself were enough to give him matter of most terrible controversy against us. But,

(4.) If we do grant, that God hath done all this for us, (exempted us all this while from miseries and ruins, put us under his protection, and that shadow which his wings have spread over us; if we will grant, I say, that God vouchsafes us the mercy of all these years, which we have enjoyed,) then let us consider, whether we must not apprehend him to have had some end, in such peculiar vouchsafements of favour to us. Is he indeed most infinitely wise, and in all respects the most absolutely perfect? And what! can he act without design? Can he in so distinguishing a way have shown favour to us, and not to others, as it were by casualty? or without saying, "So I will do. When I suffer such and such miseries to fall upon a people, professing my name, in France, in Hungary, in Piedmont, in Ireland, and elsewhere; yet I will cover and shelter those who profess my name in England?" Do we think this was without design or end?

(5.) If there is a design, if God aims at some end in all this, let it be considered, whether it is not an end worthy of himself; an end that was suitable to the wisdom, the excellency, and greatness of a God? And if so, then,

(6.) Consider, whether we can suppose it to be an end worthy of God, and suitable unto his universal perfection, only to gratify our inclination, by keeping off such and such miseries and calamities from us; when he hath not done it from others, round about us. Why was it more worthy of God to gratify the desires and inclinations in this kind, of an Englishman, than of a Frenchman, or an Hungarian, and the like? Was his end only, that he might not disturb and disquiet a people unwilling to be disturbed, and not patient of molestation? Was this his end? But,

(7.) If his end was higher and more godlike, that is, that we might have a peaceful opportunity of enjoying the Gospel, and improving it through such a tract of time; then let us consider, whether we have answered this end. Where are our advances? where is our profit? wherein is it to be seen that such a people have, for seven years together, lived under a peaceful state, and dispensation of the truth, and ordinances of the everlasting Gospel; which with others have been discontinued, and with many actually broken off? Pray, where is the difference? wherein are we better after all than they? We have experienced God's great goodness; and may still, if we continue in his goodness, and be attempered and suited thereto, in the disposition of our spirits; but if there is no such thing, what comes next but severity? Behold (saith the apostle, Rom. xi. 22.) the goodness and severity of God! which are conjoined upon the distinct suppositions which are there put in the context. And in the next place,

(8.) Let us but consider, whether we dare, any of us, lay a claim as matter of right, unto any of those private temporal mercies that we severally enjoy; namely, the health, the strength, the competent provisions which we find, and the reputation we have in the world, or with one another. Can any of us lay claim to any of these good things, considered in a private, or a personal, regard? If we cannot, then the good state of a people, which results from the particular enjoyments, accommodations, and comforts, of the several individuals, is owing entirely to the goodness and mercy of God. And who of us can say, "Because I have health this hour, therefore I shall certainly have it the next; I have health to-day, therefore I shall have it the next?" and so on. Can any of us say, "If we have peace this month, or this year, that we shall have it the next month, or year? Or, as we have now free opportunities of worshipping God, so shall we have in all future time?" How absurd reasoning would all this be! But then consider, further,

(9.) That greater miseries, than can be comprehended within the compass of time, are due to every impenitent sinner; to every one who is not converted, or turned effectually unto God in Christ. What do we talk of their not being liable unto the troubles, the calamities, and miseries, that lie within the measure of time; who, in the mean while, are liable unto eternal miseries? that they are not liable to have their houses or their city burnt, who are liable to that fire, which can never be quenched? and to have it said to them, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41. And consider,

Lastly, That they who live under the Gospel, and obey it not, nor comply with the gracious design of it, are every way liable to greater severities, than ungospelized nations ever were. Would you think it a hard saying, if one should positively determine, that London is generally liable to more terrible things than Sodom was, or Gomorrah? Hath not our Lord himself told us, that the people among whom he conversed, of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, were exposed to worse calamities, than Sodom and Gomorrah, or than Tyre and Sidon? Matt. xi. 21—25. We should consider this, not only with conviction, but with consternation, to think what we are on this account liable to; as having still such matter of provocation, as you have heard found among us.

And therefore now, since it cannot with the least modesty be pretended that we are not liable, because God hath done us so much good, to the suffering of such grievous evils, as have been mentioned; as we have in view before us, even in ancient and in modern examples; if this, I say, cannot with modesty be pretended, the most fruitful inquiry will be, how we shall demean ourselves agreeable to the state of our case, as being exposed to the terrible severities of consuming vengeance. Is it plain? doth the

thing speak itself, that we are liable to very severe consuming judgments? What shall we do hereupon? how shall we demean ourselves, or what shall be our deportment in this case? I shall shut up this discourse with a few words in answer to this.

1st, Let us not hereupon cease from the most grateful acknowledgments of God's great goodness to us, in lengthening out our tranquillity so far, as he hath been pleased to do. For wherein he hath done us good, even freely, and from mere good pleasure; certainly the most grateful acknowledgments are due. We are to give thanks with the most serious gratitude for all that good, which we could never claim; and to which we could not pretend that we had any right. But,

2dly, Though we are to rejoice in the remembrance, and continual observation of God's great goodness, yet we are to mingle trembling with rejoicing; ("Rejoice with trembling," Psalm ii. 11.) that is, we are to take heed of being secure. Our hearts should not be secure, when our state is not. It is unbecoming a prudent and considering Christian, (our state being stated as you have heard,) to admit such a thing as a drowsy slumbering security to inwrap and stupify his heart; or that we should be of them that cry, Peace, peace to themselves, when sudden destruction may be at the door. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others," (1 Thess. v. 6.) lest such a day of calamity should overtake us as a thief. It is very unbecoming a wise man to be liable to a surprise, while our case is so stated, standing in view as it doth before us.

3dly, We should have also inwrought into the temper of our spirits a firm persuasion that God is to be justified, even upon the supposition that the most destructive and consuming calamities should befall us. Let this be inlaid deeply as a principle with us, if any thing should fall out, or whenever calamities or judgments befall us, that it is our business the first thing we do, and shall be continually upon that supposition, to say, "Righteous art thou, O Lord!" Jerem. xii. 1. While we have no right to be indemnified, he hath a right to punish. Again,

4thly, We should also labour to keep our hearts loose from all our temporal enjoyments and good things; that they may not be torn away from us by violence, but by an implicit, previous consent. "Lord, I have made over my all to thee. I have resigned all into thy hands. If it shall make for the honour of thy justice, and the dignity of thy government, for me to be involved in calamities and ruins, (as no one can pretend to claim an exemption,) I submit to it; and lay myself and all at thy foot. I desire that my heart may cleave to nothing against thee, nor against any determination of thine. I live in my house, as having no right to it. I go out, as having no certainty or assurance to return. I lie down in it, as if I expected to arise in the midst of flames." And so in reference to all the temporal good things we enjoy, we should lie before him as so many convicted creatures, ready to receive our judgment from his hand. For even his Moseses and his Aarons, while he vouchsafeth them mercy, and a pardon, with respect to their eternal concernments; yet, in reference to their temporal concerns, he may take vengeance upon their inventions, Psal. xcix. 8. And in the

Last place, make sure your interest in eternal good things, by coming to a covenant closure with God in Christ. Then shall your hearts not be afraid of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh. Then will you be able to apply to yourselves that sentence of the Divine wisdom, the Son of God, (for so we are to understand it, the supreme, archetypical, and eternal wisdom,) "He that hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil;" (Prov. i. 33.) and so shall we have a calm, a quiet, a serenity in our own spirits; not from presuming, or because we conclude we shall not suffer, but upon a supposition that we shall: as was said to the church of Smyrna, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer," Rev. ii. 10. This is the way not to be in an astonishment or confusion at such a time; having our hearts possessed with the faith of such a saying as this, which is surer and more stable, than the foundations of heaven and earth: When the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever, 1 John ii. 17. Such a one may say, "I shall be unconcerned in the common ruin, when that day of the Lord cometh, which shall burn as an oven. When the whole hemisphere shall be like one fiery vault burning as an oven, I shall not be concerned in this destruction. All that have vital union with the Son of God shall be caught up to meet their Redeemer in the air, and be for ever with the Lord. I can see all this world consumed, and think myself to have lost nothing. My good lieth not here. My treasure is in heaven, and my principal interest is there."

Let this matter be once put out of doubt; and then with how cheerful, with how childlike, with how submissive spirits, may we expect and wait for the most dismal and the most dreadful things, that can fall out within the compass of time!

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following serious and pathetic discourse was preached by the author at Brixham in Devonshire, when he was about twenty-eight years of age; but upon what occasion is not certainly known.* It was communicated to the editor by a worthy gentleman in the west of England, who after mature deliberation has resolved to give it a place in this collection; not only because it is well calculated to make serious impressions on every reader, but also as it is a specimen of the excellent author's manner of preaching in his youth. There is, he thinks, no reason to doubt its being genuine; since (to use Dr. Evans's expression) it plainly carries in it the marks, which to a person of taste always distinguish his performances.

The following extracts from a few letters, sent to the editor by the gentleman to whom the world is obliged for this excellent discourse, will be sufficient to give an account of it.

"The Sermon (says he) bears date January, 1658; which, I believe, must be 58-9. For though it is not impossible but Mr. Howe might have been at Brixham in January, 58; yet as the protector (Oliver) kept him much at Whitehall, it is not so likely to be preached then, as the year after: about which time he returned into the West.† For though he continued a little while in the same relation to the protector Richard, that he did to his father; yet Dr. Calamy tells us, he cannot find that he continued longer at court than October, 58."

* It is entitled in the manuscript, "A Sermon preached at Brixham the 23rd day of January, 1658; by Mr. John Howe, a faithful minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

† Meaning to Torrington, in Devonshire.

"The copy was transcribed in the year 59. It is exceeding fair and perfect. The spirit and language of it (the discourse) plainly evince it to be the production of that masterly hand. The writer, who took it after him, does not seem to have dropped any thing, whereby the sense is any way maimed; and has religiously copied it out, as appears from the repetitions, which were made for the relief of the hearers' memory."*

"Though Mr. Howe has something to the same purpose with part of the contents of this sermon, in his treatise on Delighting in God, p. 389—392.† as one might reasonably expect; yet, though there are some of the thoughts, he has not only pursued the subject much further, but in a very different manner: insomuch that there can be no room for saying it is publishing the same thing over again, which is an injury some eminent authors have suffered after their death. Besides the fore-mentioned place, there can be no other where he has any thing so near to the purpose."

"That which brought our author on this side our country (for his charge lay fifty miles distant, to which he was lately returned) was his being related to the Upton family, of Lupton; which lies in the parish of Brixham, where 'The Vanity of Man as Mortal,' took its birth."

"It is very probable, that the Sermon was preached at once; and I have calculated on what day of the week, January 23rd, 1658-9, fell. And as D was the dominical letter for that year, the 23rd was a Friday; but if it was preached in 57-8, as the dominical letter was E, it was on a Thursday. So that as it could not be preached on a Lord's day, it was therefore most likely preached at once."‡ To all which the gentleman adds the following general remark; the latter part of which, at least, is very just.

"Though his style is not so smooth as some, yet it is as intelligible as any. And a person has this for his encouragement, that he is always sure to find something in Mr. Howe, that is well worth his pains."

* This discourse indeed abounds with repetitions, more by far than any other the editor has seen of Mr. Howe's in manuscript: most of which he omitted in his transcript of it designed for the press, and he hopes without the least injury to the whole. The sense is entire, and delivered throughout in the author's own words.

† There seems to be no resemblance, scarcely, in the whole sermon, to any thing in the pages here referred to; except in p. 390. where the text is indeed mentioned, and briefly descanted upon, and that is all.

‡ It is very probable it was preached on a fast-day; either a private one, or one of those public fast-days, which were frequently solemnized by authority before the restoration.

SERMON XIII.*

Psalm ix. 17.

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

I CANNOT spend time in opening to you the connexion of these words with those that go before. In the words themselves you have these two things more especially remarkable; to wit, the description, and the doom of wicked men. Their description you have in these words, that they are such as do forget God; and their doom is, that they shall be turned into hell. So that accordingly there are two observations that offer themselves to our view from this scripture.

FIRST, That it is the property of wicked men to forget God. And,

SECONDLY, That it shall be the portion of wicked men, who forget God, to be turned into hell. These two I intend to handle together in this order.

I. I shall show you what we are here to understand by the wicked.

II. What by forgetting God. And then,

III. I shall evince unto you, that they are wicked persons who do forget God. And then,

IV. That such wicked persons shall be turned into hell. And so make use and application of the whole together.

I. I shall briefly show you what we are to understand by these wicked, that the text speaks of. In the

1. Place, negatively, we are not to understand by the wicked here, all persons that have sin in them. There are a sort of men in the world, that will confess themselves sinners; who yet dare to acquit themselves of wickedness. Thus David speaks; "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God," Psal. xviii. 21. Every man that hath sin in him, is not presently a wicked person.

2. We are not to understand it neither of only gross sinners. As we are not to extend the signification of the word, so as to take in the former, so nor must we so much narrow it, as to take in only the latter. We are not to think that they are only spoken of as wicked ones, who live in gross and profane wickedness; so as that every one may characterize and point at them as wicked persons. No, there are wicked ones that pass under the notion of honest and good men according to common estimation; and there is such a thing as heart-wickedness, which is hidden and concealed from the eyes of the world, so as that others cannot take notice of it.

And therefore, affirmatively, by the wicked here we must understand unregenerate persons; whoever they are, that are in a state of unregeneracy. Whether they be open and gross sinners, or secret sinners only, it is all one for that: if they be such as the work of renovation hath not yet passed upon, they are those whom this scripture doth here intend by wicked ones.

II. In the second place we are to inquire what is meant by forgetting of God. The character, by which these wicked persons in the text are described, is, that they are such as forget God. Wherein then does this forgetting God consist? That is what we are next to consider. And in order to find out what we are to understand by it, our most direct course will be to consider, what is to be stated in opposition hereunto. And it is obvious at first sight, that it is thinking of God; as not to think of God, is to forget him. But here we must a little more particularly inquire, What is this thinking of God, to which the forgetting him must be understood to be opposed here? And, negatively,

1. We are not to understand by it a continual thinking of God; that is always, every moment, and without ceasing. This you may easily imagine to be impossible, and I need say no more of it.

2. Yet, on the other hand, we are not to understand by it neither a thinking of God slightly and seldom. Superficial and overly thoughts of God now and then, may well enough consist with that forgetting of God which is here spoken of.

And therefore, affirmatively, this forgetting of God stands in opposition to frequent and ordinary, serious and heart-affecting, thoughts of God. That person is here spoken of as a wicked man that forgets God, who does not think of him frequently and with affection; with fear, and delight, and those affections that are suitable to serious thoughts of God. "How precious (says the Psalmist) are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sands: when I awake I am still with thee," Psal. cxxxix. 17, 18. These thoughts of God, of which the Psalmist speaks, are such as God is the object of; as plainly appears from what is added by way of antithesis, "When I awake I am still with thee." My thoughts are

* Preached at Brixham January 23rd, 1658.

ever working towards thee, as soon as ever I awake. Now here is this twofold character of such thoughts; to wit, that they are precious, and they are numerous.

(1.) They are precious thoughts; such as affect a man's heart, and ravish the soul. Now in opposition to this, persons that forget God have no such thoughts of him; that is, they have no joyous, pleasant, and delightful thoughts concerning God, such as the Psalmist speaks of; who also says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord," Psal. civ. 34. So that it is such a forgetfulness of God, which is here spoken of, that stands in opposition to such a remembrance of him as reaches the heart, takes the soul, and turns all that is within a man towards God. And then,

(2.) They are numerous thoughts, as well as precious ones. They are not only sweet and pleasant, but they are frequent also. "If I should count them (says the Psalmist) they are more in number than the sand." Such are my thoughts of God, so frequent and numerous, and they so flow into my soul, and so often recur again and again; that if I go to count them, I may as well attempt to count the sands on the sea-shore: how great is the sum of them! Now it is in opposition to such thoughts of God that this forgetfulness must be understood. They are forgetful of God; the wicked persons, whom the text speaks of, who have not such thoughts of God frequently recurring upon their spirits, so as to affect and ravish them, as you heard before. And thus you see what this forgetfulness of God is, which the Psalmist speaks of. The next thing that is now to be done is,

III. To show you the connexion between these two things, which have been opened to you; or to evince, that those who have no such thoughts of God, as these which we speak of, are wicked persons. So you see the text plainly represents the matter; "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Why, to forget God, and to be a wicked person, is all one. And these two things will abundantly evince the truth of this assertion: namely, that this forgetfulness of God excludes the prime and main essentials of religion; and also includes in it the highest and most heinous pieces of wickedness, and therefore must needs denominate the subject, a wicked person.

1. Forgetfulness of God excludes the chief and main essentials of all religion. I shall instance in a few which you will easily discern, at first sight, a forgetfulness of God must necessarily exclude. As,

(1.) It excludes the esteem and love of God, as our highest happiness, and chief good. It is a plain case, that this is a most essential part of religion; and you will easily acknowledge, that he must needs be a wicked man with a witness that doth not esteem God, nor love him as his chief good. To esteem God as our highest happiness is to take him for our God; and the man that doth not this, disowns God as none of his. For when you say, "God is our God, and we are his people," what do you mean by it? Do you mean only the name of God, without any relation to him as your chief and highest good? is that all? Why, if there be any thing beyond a bare name, where or what is it? You must say it is this; "God is my portion, happiness, and delight; he it is whom I esteem, and love, beyond all the things of this world." Nothing else can be a taking or owning God to be your God. This is the very sum of all that God doth require from any people that would be related to him and own him for their God. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee? but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul," Deut. x. 12. "Otherwise," as if he had said, "you disown all relation to me." If it be not thus, you are never to reckon me as your God. If your hearts and souls and strength do not run out in love to me, you are none of mine, and I am none of yours." And God is again on the same terms with his people. "Hear, O my people, and I will testify against thee; O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; there shall no strange god be in thee, neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," Psal. lxxxi. 8, 9, 10. The plain tenor of this scripture is this. "If you will have any thing at all to do with me, if you pretend any obedience or affection to me, you must take me alone to be your God, you must not entertain any strange god; there must be no god that must be higher in your thoughts than I, or adored and loved more than myself. If it be not so, if there are such among you as will not thus hearken to me, I have nothing to do with you." Thus it is evident, that it must needs be an essential thing in religion for a man to love and esteem God above all things; he must esteem him as his highest, chiefest, and most excellent good; for it is such a valuing of God that can alone denominate a man religious.

And now do but a little consider. Do you think it possible for such an estimation or love of God, as the highest and chiefest good, to consist with a forgetting of God? Can a man forget God from day to day, in the sense of the text, and yet esteem and love this God as his highest happiness and chief good? Is this possible? Can you apprehend it to be possible, that a man should place the top of his felicity in God; and love God above all things else in the world; and yet pass from day to day and never think of him with delight and pleasure? Is this, think you, consistent with the esteem of God, as your chief good? You cannot be so vain as to think so. That man would be hissed at as a ridiculous person, that will say, "What I love above all things in the world, I never use to think of. I love God better than any thing, but he hath no place in my thoughts; I never think of him; I can pass on from day to day, and never have a serious thought of him." Is this possible? You see what the love of God in the soul doth carry in it, namely, a remembrance of him, in the twenty-sixth chapter of Isaiah, "The desire of our soul is unto thee, and to the remembrance of thy name," ver. 8. That person would be scorned as a most absurd wretch, that would ever offer to pretend such a thing unto God, as to say, "Lord, I desire to love thee above all things in the world, and yet I never think of thee; it is very seldom that thou hast any place at all in my thoughts."

This is the most absurd, self-conceited speech that can be imagined. None that have any wit at all, but know that if they have any understanding of God, their souls do earnestly and vehemently flow forth in love and desires to God. Our Lord says, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven—for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Matt. vi. 20, 21. Lay up your treasures in heaven, that is, in God; let God be your treasure. You know what a man counts his treasure; why, it is that which is most dear and precious to him; most valued by him, and loved above all things else. A man will count nothing his treasure, but what he holds in great esteem. Let your treasure then, says Christ, be in heaven; that is, let God who is in heaven, who there makes known his glorious presence, that is enjoyed by saints and angels, and which we expect to enjoy, let him be your treasure. And where our treasure is, there will our hearts be. What you esteem and love beyond all things, your hearts will be continually working to, and your spirits flow that way. It is a mere absurd vanity to talk of having a treasure in God, if a man's heart be not with him. As she said to Samson, "How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me," Judg. xvi. 15. So the soul is apt to say, it loves God, and counts him its treasures, and highest happiness, when, alas! the heart is not with him. We find that a light esteeming of God is the same thing with forgetting him, and those expressions are used as synonymous by Moses. "Jeshurun forsook God that made him, and he lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." Deut. xxxii. 15. And then presently it follows, "Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee," ver. 18. Thus to make a light account of God is the same thing as to forget him; and therefore that person has never yet set one foot towards religion, who hath not yet made God his chief happiness, the only joy and delight of his soul. Therefore this is one thing, that forgetfulness of God doth exclude the estimation and love of God, as our portion and chief good.

(2.) Forgetfulness of God excludes dependance on God as our strength, and the life and stay of our souls; which is also a most essential piece of religion. That man knows nothing at all practically in matters of religion, that does

not live in a continual dependance upon God as the life, and strength, and support of the soul. They are spoken of as persons who cannot possibly obtain salvation, while in their present state, who are not yet come to that believing in God, which carries the whole heart to acquiesce, and rest, and centre in God. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Rom. x. 13, 14. Calling upon God is a thing essentially necessary unto salvation, and believing in him is indispensably necessary unto calling upon him. It is put for the whole worship of God; and it is impossible for a soul ever thus to call upon God; that is, to worship him, to live subject to him, and be devoted and given up to him, who doth not believe in him. And this believing in God respects him as the stay and strength of a man's soul. It plainly implies a sensibleness of its being utterly impossible that I should subsist or live without God; and supposes a constant reliance upon him as my God, who is my very life and strength. And therefore you find how those who do not so, are derided by the Psalmist. "The righteous shall see and fear, and sha.. laugh at him: Lo! this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. But I am like a green olive-tree, in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever," Psal. lii. 6, 7, 8. The soul that is truly religious is by trust so planted into the very mercy of God, as I may speak, that there it is rooted, and sprouts as a tree doth, in the soil that bears it. But they are outcasts, and a company of profane irreligious wretches, that do not thus trust in God, and make him the stay and support of their souls. "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength!" It is remarkable to see in how ludicrous a way such persons are spoken of, as if they were to be hissed out of the creation. "Lo, there is a man that lives without God; a person not fit to be numbered among men! Away with him as a most ridiculous wretch, who thinks to live without staying upon God!"

Trust in God then is essential to religion. And do you think that this can possibly consist with forgetting God? Can a man trust in God, as the stay and support of his life, of whom he is unmindful? who can pass one day after another, and never vouchsafe him a serious thought? Trust in God is a continual thing. I do not mean that it is to be exercised without intermission, but that it is an habitual dependance. And therefore it is said, "The just shall live by faith," Heb. x. 38. We live by breathing, and it will not serve our turn to breathe to-day, and live by that breath many days hereafter. No, that which we live by is a continual thing. And thus the just shall live by a continual reliance and dependance on God; which implies a mindfulness of him. When the Psalmist speaks of that trust which he reposed in God, he speaks of it in this language; "I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved," Psal. xvi. 8. Here was a continual minding of God. What is it to have God always before us, but to have him the prime and the principle object of our thoughts? so as that there is nothing on which our eye doth so much fix as it doth on God. And this stands with that conjunction, or that dependance which the soul has on God. So again, "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the net," xxv. 15. That is, my reliance is upon God; mine eye is continually towards him, and I have him ever in my thoughts. It is he in whom I live, and from whom I have all my expectation. Thus it is impossible that a man should be in this sense a religious person, who is forgetful of God; since he who thinks not upon him, cannot be supposed to depend upon him as the life and strength of his soul.

(3.) Forgetfulness of God excludes also the fear of God; and that awful subjection unto his laws and commands, as our rule, wherein the soul should continually live: and this is too an essential part of religion, as is well known to all that understand any thing of religion. Can he ever be said to be a religious man that doth not live in the fear of God? Why, it is so essential a piece of religion, that the Scripture doth often call all religion by that very thing, the fear of God. And hence it is also, that you find all wickedness summed up in this very expression; "There is no fear of God before their eyes," Rom. iii. 18. The apostle had been describing a wicked man at large, out of some of the Psalms, (xiv. liii. &c.) and this is that which he gathers up as the whole of that wickedness he had been painting out; to wit, there is no fear of God before their eyes. They are wicked persons with a witness that do not fear God, that live without having any fear of God before their eyes. And must not forgetfulness of God necessarily exclude the fear of God? What? can any man be said to fear him, whom he thinks not of? to fear God when he minds him not, when he hath him not in all his thoughts? Do but observe the connexion between this passage and the eleventh verse of the same chapter, quoted out of the Psalms. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." It follows, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Indeed it is impossible it should; if they have no thoughts of God, if their minds and understandings be not bent towards him, it is impossible they should fear him. What! fear an unthought-of God? a God that a man does not think of, from day to day? why, it is an absurd thing ever to be imagined. And therefore this is a further thing that the forgetfulness of God excludes; namely, that fear of God, and that reverential subjection that we owe to his laws and commands, as the rule of our lives. And then again,

(4.) It excludes the intention of the honour and glory of God, as our end. That man hath no more religion in him, than there is in a beast, who doth not in the ordinary course of his life, design and aim at the glory of God, as the supreme and ultimate end of his actions. You know it is that, which is required and called for from us in every thing we do. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. This is a truth obvious to the understanding of every one, that every person who is religious, intends and designs the honour and glory of the great God, as the ultimate and chief end of the ordinary actions of his life. So as if a man should come and ask him, "For what is it that you are going about this business, and those affairs; and what end have you in what you do?" he will say, "That I may honour and glorify God in so doing." This is religion. So then it is not enough to bespeak a man religious, to do things that are in their own nature honest and just, and not liable to exception; but to do them designedly for the honour and glory of the great God, as his end. Now do but consider. Can a man do so, and not think of God? Can it ever be rationally said of any one of you, that you live from day to day in the service of the great God, and to the honour and glory of his great name, as the chief and principal thing you design in your whole life; when you do not, from day to day, think of God? do not from morning to night take up one serious thought of God? Why, your own hearts will tell you it is utterly impossible; and a man is nothing in religion, who does not come up to this; who does not make the glory of God the ultimate end of his affairs, and the actions of his life.

Thus you see that forgetfulness of God excludes the principal and essential parts of religion. It implies, that a man doth neither esteem, nor value, the all sufficiency and holiness of God, as his happiness and portion; nor doth he trust in the power and omnipotence of God, as his strength and support; nor doth he fear him, nor live in subjection to his laws and commands, as his rule; nor doth he aim at the glory of God, as his end: therefore every one who thus forgets God, must certainly be a wicked person.

2. Consider also what is included in this forgetfulness of God. As it excludes the main essentials of religion, why so truly it does include the most horrid and heinous pieces of wickedness that you can think of. I shall instance, very briefly, in a few.

(1.) It includes worldliness and earthly-mindedness. The soul, though forgetful of God, is not idle. If God is not the object of a man's thoughts and affections, something else is. They do not want an object. They find something else to employ themselves about, when they thus forget God and shut him out of their thoughts. For much is evidently implied in this scripture; "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even

weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things," Philip. iii. 18, 19. Observe those very persons who are here spoken of as minding earthly things, are also said to be such as have chosen to themselves another god. Their god is their belly. This we are not to understand strictly, but in a large sense; to wit, their sensual appetite. Their belly is their god; and accordingly they mind earthly things, and their hearts are quite taken off from God. And do not think this is a light piece of wickedness, to live a whole life's time in this manner; especially under the Gospel, and the profession of the Christian name. The apostle as it were weeps over it. It is a thing, saith he, that I cannot think of without passion and tears; to see a company of wretches that call themselves Christians, and profess themselves to be so, who yet are the enemies of the cross of Christ; they are apparently such, for they mind earthly things. This then is one thing that forgetfulness of God includes, namely, earthly-mindedness; which is the most horrid wickedness you can think of, for it stands in most direct opposition to God; and therefore covetousness is called idolatry, or a taking another god. And then again,

(2.) It included enmity against God. It is a plain case; if men from day to day forget God, it is because they hate him, and cannot endure the thoughts of him. It is expressly spoken of some, that "they liked not to retain God in their knowledge," Rom. i. 28. What is it to retain God in our knowledge, but to have frequent actual thoughts about him? such as I have already spoken of, numerous and affecting thoughts. This is to retain God in our knowledge. But can they be said to do so, who do not think of God? who have no actual thoughts of God, from day to day? And why is this? Because they do not like them. The thoughts of God are grating, grievous, and annoying to their spirits; and therefore it is they do not think of him, because they do not love to think of him. This must needs be so, especially considering the case of such persons under the Gospel. God is ever before their eyes, they cannot look any way but they must see God shining upon them. He is shining upon them in his creatures, in his providences, but especially in the ordinances of the Gospel of his Son; and yet these persons will not now mind God, nor take notice of him. What is the reason of it? They do not, because they will not; or because their hearts cannot bear it. "Oh! take away God from my thoughts! take him away from my soul! It is a burden, a pressure on my spirit! I cannot bear the thoughts of God." Thus says the apostle; "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace. The carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. viii. 5, 6, 7. Do but observe here; he tells us that they who are after the flesh, or carnally-minded, will not mind any of the things of the Spirit of God; and that it is to be resolved into this, namely, that a carnal mind is enmity against God. And it is a plain case that such a one must be an enemy to him. Therefore it is, that he minds the things of the earth and of flesh; and will not look after God, nor spend any thoughts about him. No, he will rather choose to live upon dirt, and feed upon trash; and to spend thoughts and affections upon things that are as vile as earth and dung. And if such persons would but consult their hearts they would find it so. For, alas! when you are alone, and retired, have nothing else to do but to think of God, (as upon such a day as this especially, when you have no other business but to think upon him,[a]) pray consider, which way do your thoughts run? Can you say, it is God that is the object of your thoughts and affections? that upon such a day as this, they are from morning to night taken up about nothing else but God? You have nothing else to do but to think of God; and if your thoughts decline, and turn aside after covetousness and the things of this world, what is this but a plain enmity against him? And this is what the hearts of men say; they rather choose the most despicable, base objects to spend their thoughts upon, than about God. And is it, think you, a light piece of wickedness for a man to have such an enmity in his heart against God? And then again,

(3.) In the third place, forgetfulness of God includes in it plainly a contempt of him; or implies that we have a base, low, dishonourable esteem of God. It is said (in the psalm next to that in which is my text) of the wicked man, that "God is not in all his thoughts," Psal. x. 4. The wicked wretch passes from day to day, and never affords God a serious thought, nor allows him a place th re. And what is the reason of it? Why the Psalmist puts it plainly upon an open manifest contempt of God. "Wherefore (saith he) doth the wicked contemn God?" ver. 13. He speaks, as indeed the interrogation imports, with a kind of passion. Oh! wherefore is it? what heart can think of a reason, why any man should presume to contemn God? In short, their taking low base things into their thoughts while they shut out God, plainly proceeds from a contempt of him, and because they despise him in their own hearts. And,

(4.) To add no more, forgetfulness of God implies atheism; which involves in it all wickedness, as being the root and bottom of all. Persons who forget God, plainly deny in their own hearts that there is such a one; who ought to be the highest supreme object of their thoughts and affections. This evidently appears from the connexion of the beginning of the fourteenth psalm, with the following verses. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God." And the report you have is this: "They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one." There is not a person to be found among all these wretches that understands, or seeks after God; or hath any serious thoughts or consideration about him. And what is the reason of all this? Why, like fools as they are, they have said in their hearts, that there is no God: and hence it is that their minds and understandings have quite forgotten, and given over to look towards him; whereas "he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6. They are corrupted within themselves, and then surmise that there is no such Being to whom they are accountable; and therefore they live securely, neglecting and forgetting him, from day to day, through their whole life. There is also a like connexion in the fiftieth psalm, towards the latter end. "These things hast thou done (having summed up a great many kinds of wickedness before in the preceding verses) and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God!" To deny any of God's essential attributes, is to take away his being. To say, that he is not so holy, as to hate sin; that he is not so just, as to revenge and punish sinners; is to say, that he is not.

Well! this you see is connected with forgetting of God. But this God whom you slight, and make so little reckoning of; this God, I say, will reprove you. And I pray, consider, ye that forget God, who have all this while looked upon him as if he was like the idols of this world, that the time is coming when he will set your sins in order before your faces.

And thus I have evinced to you this truth, that they are wicked persons who forget God; which is evidenced thus: to wit, forgetfulness of God excludes all religion, and also includes all wickedness; and what would you have more? It must needs then denominate such a person, who lives in the guilt of it, a wicked person with a witness; since it grasps within its compass all wickedness, and shuts out all religion.[b]

IV. The fourth thing propounded to be spoken to, was this; namely, That these wicked persons, who thus live in a forgetfulness of God, must be turned into hell. I

a This passage makes it very probable, that this sermon was preached on one of those fast-days, which were frequently solemnized before the restoration, by public authority.

b If any should find this discourse too long to be read at once, particularly in families, here is a proper resting-place.

shall touch briefly upon it, and so close with a few words of application. As it is the property of the wicked man to forget God, so it must be his portion to be turned into hell. The eviction of this will be easily evident from considering these three things only—1. It is most consonant to the justice of God that thus it should be—2. It is most agreeable to his law; and—3. It is most serviceable to his honour and glory.

1. The justice of God doth require this; that those persons, who live in this world forgetful of God, should at last be turned into hell. If God be just he must deal in this manner with a company of rebels; who never take notice of him all their days, and shut him out of their hearts and thoughts. What! can the highest God, the eternal Majesty, suffer such an affront as this from base dirt and earth, and never take vengeance? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (Rom. iii. 5.) as the apostle speaks in this case. No, undoubtedly. But I cannot stand now to insist on particulars.

2. It is agreeable to his law that God should thus punish the wicked. It is one and the self-same law that is a rule of duty to us, and which by the Divine appointment is a rule of judgment unto him. And this righteous law hath determined, that they who thus sin, must be thus punished. For this we need go no further than the text itself. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." The law of God hath expressly provided in this case; so that if any man should now think to put in his exception against this determination of God, alas! it must be said to him: "Vain wretch, it is now too late! This law was made long ago; before thou wert born, or heard of in the world, and ever since the world was. And dost thou think a law shall be repealed in a way of favour to a most rebellious wretch, which the sovereign eternal God had established before the ages of the world; that it might be a fundamental and invariable rule of God's proceedings even to the end of it? Alas! it cannot be." God hath decreed many thousand years ago this law; that they who do forget him, shall be turned into hell without mercy. And if this be their continual state and frame without a change, it must needs be thus with them. There is no alteration in this case; for "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent, (heathen Balaam knew so much of God as that came to.) Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Numb. xxiii. 19.

3. And again in the third place, it is most serviceable to his glory and honour, that thus it should be; I mean, that those who persist, and go on to the last in a forgetfulness of God, should be turned into hell. For what glory hath he otherwise of them? "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," Prov. xvi. 4. He will punish them in the day of judgment, because they are the most perverse creatures that ever came out of his hands. He hath made them for the day of wrath, as the wise man speaks; and there is no other way for the Lord to have his honour and glory of those persons.[c] See to this purpose what is spoken in the words immediately before the text; "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth:" and then it follows, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." And why must this be? Because God will never else be known by them. Here they live so many years in the world, and God shows himself by his creatures, by his providences, and by his ordinances; and they will take no notice of him: they spend away their days, and allow God none of their thoughts. "I cannot be regarded by these creatures, (saith God,) they do not regard, nor take notice of me. Well! I shall take my leave of them. When they come to be turned into hell, and to fall under the pressures of everlasting wrath and misery, then they will not forget God; then they will know the God they never knew before; then they will remember him, though now they never think of him. Let them now try (saith God) whether they will forget me, now that I have them under my wrath and vengeance. While they are in this world, they banish me out of their hearts and thoughts; I cannot get one spare thought from them from one day to another; but when they come to feel me, and the power of my anger, they will then know that which they would never know before." Thus you see, that God's justice, his law, and his glory require, that those wicked persons who forget God should be turned into hell. I shall close all with some few words of application.

I. We may hence learn, that religion consisting of mere externals will never save any man. A person may be a wicked man, and liable to be turned into hell, notwithstanding any religion that lies in mere outside show. You see this plainly, that men are liable to be turned into hell for their forgetfulness of God. Why, a man may forget God, and yet live under ordinances, and under the Gospel. A man may forget God, and yet may be a moral man, and just and righteous in his dealings among men. And therefore, it is nothing that lies in mere externals, that will either denominate a man religious, or that will save him from perishing. A man may go to the utmost extent of all outside religion, and yet forget God; be wicked all the while, and so turned into hell at last. And therefore, it is a vanity for men to deceive themselves into a hope, that all is well with them; and that all shall go well with them at last, because they are professors, and enjoy Gospel privileges; or because that no man can challenge them with fraud, injury, or wrong done to their neighbours. It is a vain thing for them to think that therefore they are safe, and in no danger. They are all the while forgetters of God, and that is enough to bespeak them wicked; let them in other respects be what they will. And therefore you are to know, that it is not taking up a profession, or this and that form of religion, that will entitle a soul to glory and salvation at last; but it must be the having of such a work done upon the heart, as will turn the stream of a man's soul towards God, and carry his thoughts and affections after him. It is this or nothing, that must make you Christians, and save you from hell.

It is but too common a vanity in these days, wherein we live, for men of carnal hearts and corrupt minds, that could never endure to be at the pains and expense to wait upon God in the way of his ordinances, in order to have their hearts thus changed and turned unto God; it is, I say, a common vanity with such persons, to think that all their business, in order to secure themselves and provide for their own safety and welfare, is to take up a certain form of worshipping and serving God. Alas! a man may perish, and go to hell, whatever form he is of, if he has a carnal heart; a heart that doth not delight in God: this will be sufficient to damn a man at last, let him take what course or be of what religion he will. And it is a plain case, it speaks an unsound, shifting heart, which cannot endure that such a work as this should be done, but slinks

c The learned author seems, almost every where, to quote texts of Scripture with great propriety, and is generally very happy and judicious in his descants upon them; of which all his posthumous discourses (as well as those published by himself) are an abundant testimony; notwithstanding the liberty he allowed himself, and the familiar freedom with which he delivered them, without written notes. But the editor is apprehensive, that some may look upon the quotation of this passage from Solomon, as an exception. It must be acknowledged, that these words have often been made use of in favour of a very discouraging doctrine: which, above all others, tends to enervate the force of all the motives and arguments, that can be made use of, to engage persons to attend to the exhortations to a holy and religious life. And because some may imagine the author, from his comment on the passage, understood it in the sense here alluded to, which is evidently contrary to the general strain and tenor of his sentiments, in all his writings, it may not be improper to endeavour to set it in its true point of light, and to show in what sense the author may be understood.

It is very true, the glory of God's justice requires (as the author had observed) that wicked men be punished. For to suppose that God will make those happy, who live in a criminal forgetfulness of him, is a kind of outraging all his perfections; and no more to be imagined than that he will make an innocent being, for instance an angel that never fell, eternally miserable out of mere sovereignty and pleasure. Neither reason nor revelation represent the Almighty as so terrible to the innocent, or so easy to the guilty. But to assert that wicked men, persisting in forgetfulness of God and a course of sin, will be punished in the day of wrath; is to assert a very great and awful truth, and very probably is all that the author meant by this passage. But however, as the learned Bishop Patrick observes, the sense of the place seems to be this; that God makes use of wicked men, as well as all things else, to answer the ends of his providence in this world. As for instance; by the ambition of tyrants he inflicts those calamities, which he designs upon a wicked nation or people. But the sense, after all, needs not to be so confined. God has made all things for himself; or, as the words may be rendered, he has made all things to correspond, or answer to each other; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. That is, not only to be his scourge or instrument of bringing calamities upon others in this life, but has suited and proportioned the punishment of evil men to their deserts; or has settled the connexion between vice and misery in the world to come: just as he has fixed the relation of virtue to future happiness; or, as it is elegantly expressed, made righteousness and peace to kiss each other.

away from it. Such are pinching and galling ways; and therefore they seek for ease and rest some other way, and for a cheaper method of getting to heaven; as if going into such a party would save a man. Why, alas! it will not do it. It must be a change wrought upon the heart and soul, that will take it off from this world, and pitch it upon God; if we would have an interest in him, or live in his blessedness another day. There are those, who are like the persons Saint Paul speaks of to Timothy. "The time (says he) will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables," 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. Thus it is with many wretched souls in the ways of God: while they have been walking in them, it may be they have been barren and unfruitful, through their carnal hearts, which cannot endure to have any thing done to the purpose; therefore they desire to find an easier way than this. They run to other teachers, having itching ears; and think of going to heaven upon other terms, by only taking up other forms, and changing the way of their religion. This speaks a heart to be unsound; as it is a sign of an unsound body, that can rest itself in no posture, but lies tumbling and tossing in the bed. It hath rest no where; when it hath rolled one way to another, it must come back to the same pitch and posture it was in before. Why, the man is not well! alas! the fault is not in the bed, but the body; it is because the body is not well, but unsound and unhealthy, that it cannot rest. And so men under the ordinances of the Gospel dispensation cannot find rest to themselves. They cannot indeed find fault with them; but they have fleshly carnal hearts, that cannot endure any thing should be done to change, and turn them unto God; and therefore they seek out new ways, that they may get to heaven in a cheaper and an easier manner. And if such souls have a mind to go in those ways, that were never known or heard of before, for so many years, they will not find what they seek. For, alas! a carnal heart will carry its own pest and trouble about it, wherever it goes: and they will be forced either to say at last, the old way of real religion is best; or else they will cast off all religion, and there will be the end, as experience in this case doth abundantly witness.

II. As this plainly instructs us, that religion, lying in externals only, will never save a man; so it informs us also, that wickedness, lying in the heart and thoughts, will abundantly suffice to damn a man. And this is no strange doctrine; at least it should not seem to any that have ever read the Bible, and know what belongs to true religion. Do not you know, that the heart and the thoughts are the prime and principal spring of that wickedness that ruins souls and turns them into hell for ever? "Out of the heart (says Christ) proceed evil thoughts;" (Matt. xv. 19.) and these speak a man defiled, make him wicked, and turn him into hell at last. Observe also this scripture: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Jer. iv. 14. Wickedness and vain thoughts here are parallel expressions, which expound one another. That wickedness, of which the prophet speaks, consists in the vanity of the thoughts: and those are a man's vainest and most wicked thoughts, that run beside God; and have not him for their object, nor terminate upon him. Therefore wash thine heart from this wickedness, for certainly else there will be no salvation for thee. Alas! thou art a damned man, a lost creature, if thine heart be not washed from this wickedness of the thoughts. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee," Acts viii. 22. In short, to exclude God out of our thoughts, and not to let him have a place there; not to mind, nor think upon God; is the greatest wickedness of the thoughts that can be. And therefore, though you cannot say of such a one, he will be drunk; or he will swear, cozen, or oppress; yet if you can say he will forget God, or that he lives all his days never minding nor thinking upon God; you say enough to speak him under wrath, and to turn him into hell without remedy.

III. If they are wicked persons who do not think of God, and shall for that reason be turned into hell, then all thoughts are not free; that is, men are not at liberty, as they vainly imagine, to dispose of their thoughts as they will. Alas! the case is quite otherwise than what many poor wretches imagine. They go up and down in the world, never minding God from day to day, and they think this is no sin; saying, "Why, what is this? It is but the disposing my thoughts; and surely I may do what I will with my thoughts. What matter is it what becomes of them?" But saith God; "What is there else that I value more, or set a greater price upon, than the thoughts and affections of the soul? I must have them or nothing. So, be what thou wilt in profession and pretence; yet if I be not in thy thoughts, if I be forgotten by thee, I will look upon thee as a wicked person, as one that shall be turned into hell." Truly, if the case be so, you must learn to correct that foolish imagination, that your thoughts are free; or that you may use them as you please: and know, that if men will give him no place there, this is a desperate, horrid wickedness, that the great God will be avenged upon one day.

IV. Since the case is thus, that wicked men, and all those who forget God, shall be turned into hell; we may learn hence, that there are but few that shall be saved. Do but weigh the case seriously, and consider with yourselves, how few there are that so live, or in the face of whose conversations it appears, that their hearts are set upon God! whose minds are taken up about him, walking up and down the world from morning to night, rejoicing and delighting themselves in God! Oh, how few such there are; and consequently how few that are not wicked, and shall not be turned into hell at last! My friends, God doth not dally with us in such scriptures as these. They are plain words which are here spoken, and we may turn off the edge of them from rending and cutting our hearts if we will; but one day we shall hear that we were told, and read also, that "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." We may easily therefore learn from hence, that going to heaven is not so common a thing as most men take it to be. Alas! it is not, if the word of God be true. It will be found, that going to hell will be much more ordinary among men that live under the Gospel, than going to heaven. For it is said, they shall be turned into hell that forget God. Now, are not these plain words? Do they not evince and demonstrate that a great part (alas! the greatest part) are hurrying into hell apace? And is it not sad and miserable to think, that poor souls should thus spend all their life-time under a Gospel of grace? and that so much light and love should shine from heaven in vain? It should not be thought of, without pain and agony, that men should thus perish; that there should be so few saved from hell and destruction, notwithstanding they are under a Gospel of light and salvation! The truth I am upon is intimated in part of the message to the church of Sardis. "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy," Rev. iii. 4. Alas! how few are there, how few amongst a whole assembly and congregation of people, that keep themselves from pollution through lusts? How few names are there to be found in an assembly, who come under the character of persons that have not defiled their garments! or, of those who have numerous thoughts of God from day to day! How few are there, that do not come under the character in the text, of being forgetters of God; and so of such as must be turned into hell? It concerns us all to be serious in thinking upon this matter. God hath been serious in revealing this truth to us; and his Spirit is poured out for the confirming, establishing, and pressing it upon your hearts and spirits, whoever you are; and therefore think well of it, and consider seriously how few good men there are, who shall finally be saved.

V. You may hence learn also, that God hath an inspection into, and a full knowledge of, the hearts and thoughts of men. This is evident, for you see he makes his judgment upon what lies within the inward man; and his judgment at last will proceed upon the same ground. "I must have those turned into hell, (saith the Almighty,) who never think of, nor remember their God: they must undergo my wrath that have thus forgotten me." Now, if God's judgments must be thus determined upon what is in the heart

of man, then he knows your hearts; and also what you do with your thoughts from day to day. His eye is upon your souls and spirits; and sees all the day long which way your affections lie, and which way they are carried: and it is by this he must guide his judgment at the last day. Thus says the Psalmist; "He that planteth the ear shall not he hear? He that formed the eye, shall not he see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity," Psal. xciv. 9, 10, 11. He knows well all the vanity of your spirits, though you may not observe it. His eyes are observing us all the day long, especially on such a day as this; and according to the observation he makes, he must judge us at the last day. And therefore he must be supposed to have a full and perfect understanding of all things; so as to be able in that day to lay out before a man the wickedness of his whole life; to spread before him the vain and wicked, the sensual and earthly thoughts, which he was perpetually exercised in; and of which his carnal heart was the continual tomb. And this cannot be a more difficult than it is a necessary thing to him, who must search the hearts, and try the reins, that he may judge accordingly at the last day. And then,

VI. And lastly, we may learn hence, that it is not an impossible or difficult thing for wicked men to know themselves to be such; and to make a judgment of their own estates God-ward. For you see, they have a plain rule to judge by; namely, this truth: He that forgets God is a wicked man; and he is a wicked man that thus forgets God; and he that forgets God must be turned into hell. I pray now do but consider, and think with yourselves. Is it so impossible for a man to know what is the ordinary course of his own thoughts? You may easily know if you will, at least the generality of you may know, what the current of your thoughts is; and so far make a judgment of your estate accordingly. This we must needs acknowledge. For those men who are carnal and earthly, their hearts tell them they have not a thought of God, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year. Such persons cannot be so brutish and absurd, but they may know it, if they will, especially if they will take God's word. If not, let them see whether they can have any surer rule that cannot deceive. But if they will take God's word, they cannot but see that they are those persons who are wicked, as they are forgetful of God; and upon that account must be turned into hell at last. My friends! if we do not study wilfully to ruin ourselves, is it so hard a matter for a man, a reasonable man, to sit down at night and consider, "Whither have my thoughts been this day? Who hath had my thoughts most? What have I taken most pleasure in this day? Is it in God? hath he been so delightful and so pleasant, and the remembrance of him in my heart and soul, as the pleasures and comforts of this life have been to me? Have I taken so much delight to-day in the law of God, as I have in my friends, my riches, and my relations? And have I had that fear of God in my heart, lest I should sin against him, as I have had about my business and affairs, lest they should miscarry?" Is it impossible, I say, for a reasonable man thus to consider, from day to day, whither hath been the course of his heart and thoughts? And if he find it is thus with him; that he lives without having a thought of God, that may stay his heart, and ravish his soul; how obvious then is it, that he is a wicked wretch! that the wrath of God pursues him! and that he must be turned into hell, without remedy, if this continues to be the state and condition of his soul! Consider this, and give me leave to close up all with one word of counsel and advice to such persons as these: and may it be acceptable to your hearts!

1. Own your state and condition. If the case be thus, as you see it is, that they are wicked persons who forget God, and that such shall be turned into hell; why, look into your own hearts, and see whether they are not forgetful of God. And when you find that it is thus with you, let your judgment pass upon your souls, and say; "My wretched and undone soul! thou art that soul whom this law condemns; whom this judgment convinceth as guilty of this wickedness against God, and liable to his vengeance upon this account!" Therefore I say, own your estate. It is no difficult thing for you to know it. Say then, "I am the person whom the word of God condemns: I am under the curse as a person that has forgotten God, and must be turned into hell upon this account, if it thus continue with me." But this is not all. I would not leave a soul in this case miserably perishing, and despairing of all possibility of being saved; but however know that you cannot be saved while it is thus with you, and while your hearts are thus framed and turned from God. Therefore,

2. Labour forthwith to have the course and stream of your spirits turned towards God: otherwise, all hopes of your being saved are quite taken away. There is no possibility of your salvation, till your carnal earthly hearts be changed. Consider and believe it, there are but these two things; either a change of heart, or ruin. And therefore labour, I say, to have the course of your thoughts turned about, and directed forthwith towards God, without any more delay.

And in order to this, you must in the first place endeavour to get a right and distinct knowledge of God; otherwise you can never think rightly of him. Study his word; labour to know what is there discovered of his justice, righteousness, holiness, and power; of his goodness, and his love. Take in the whole compass of the discovery of God, to make up the object of your thoughts; otherwise you do nothing; your thoughts will pitch upon some other thing, besides God. If you take in but part of the attributes of God, that is no God. It will be some idle fancy that you take in, and not God, if your thoughts are not so comprehensive as to take in the whole discovery of God in those several attributes, by which he makes himself known.

And then in the next place you must labour to have a work of sanctification, and regeneration, wrought upon your own hearts. As there must be a right stating of the object, so there must be a right framing of the subject too; otherwise it will be to no purpose. If there be not a change wrought in the very inward of your souls, so as that your hearts be turned towards God; to love, and delight in him, with all your soul, and strength; alas! your thoughts of God will not be voluntary, but forced; they will never be free, pleasant, and delightful. And therefore you must often go to God, and cry to him, and say; "Lord, I see my thoughts run from thee! I cannot think of God at any time with pleasantness. Sanctify this heart! turn it to thyself! else I am lost, and shall be turned into hell." Cry thus unto God mightily, and incessantly, till you find such a work done upon your souls; for that is the only thing that will procure a freedom, and facility of thoughts, towards God; those holy, pleasant, and delightful thoughts, of which a sanctified heart will be a continual spring and fountain.

And to press all this, I will deal plainly with you. If the case be not thus; if your hearts are not turned, and changed, that you may have such thoughts of God as we have been speaking of, there is no avoiding the misery threatened in the text; but there must of necessity be an expectation shortly of being turned into hell. That must certainly be the portion of those persons that forget God. And is that a thing easy and tolerable to your thoughts? Is it easy and tolerable to you to think of being sent into that place of torment, without remedy and without hope; merely upon this account, because you would needs live without God in the world; and would never have your hearts brought towards him? Many deceive themselves with the opinion of a tolerable hell; and therefore, such a consideration hath no force upon their spirits in the least. But think upon it a little, think what hell is! Why, it is that place of torment, that God himself hath ordained for the punishment of wickedness and transgression against him. He himself is the Author of that state, and of that torment that doth belong unto it. It proceeds from almighty power, omnipotent wrath and justice. And is that, think you, a tolerable thing? That "Tophet (the hell which the text speaks of) is ordained of old—the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it," Isa. xxx. 33. Is this, think you then, a slight matter, for a man thus to hurry and throw away his soul? thus to suffer himself to run into this hell and destruction, and merely because he would live without God; slight, despise, and turn God out of his heart and

soul, while he is here in the world? Hell is appointed and prepared by God, in order to that just revenge that he must take, and will take, upon all those wicked transgressors, that have their hearts thus hardened, and shut up against him. Alas! that is a dreadful thing to think of. Revenge! the revenge of a God! that the eternal and almighty God should design such a thing, as the avenging of himself in such a way upon wicked men! O what heart, that is not made of stone or a rock, can choose but tremble? To think, "I shall shortly be subject unto the wrath of God, because I have forgotten him, and have lived without him in the world; unless my heart be wrought upon and turned to him as the God of my life;" how dreadful is this! Let me then recommend to you, in the close, that one scripture, partly touched on before, which is at the end of the fiftieth psalm. "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you to pieces, and there be none to deliver," Psal. l. 22. What! are those who forget God wicked persons? must wicked persons be turned into hell? is this hell, and is this place appointed for the torment of such wretches, by the eternal and almighty God; that he may take his revenge upon them, for their slighting and neglecting of him, or for what they have done in this world? Why then consider this, all ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. And so much shall suffice to be spoken to this text.

SERMONS.

I. ON THE GOSPEL RECOMMENDING ITSELF TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE. SEVEN SERMONS, FROM 2 COR. IV. 2.

II. THEY TO WHOM THE GOSPEL IS HID, ARE LOST SOULS. SIX SERMONS, FROM 2 COR. IV. 3.

III. ON HOPE. FOURTEEN SERMONS, FROM ROM VIII. 24.

IV. FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. TEN SERMONS, FROM JAMES II. 23

V. ON REGENERATION. THIRTEEN SERMONS, FROM 1 JOHN V. 1

PART I.

CONCERNING GOD'S EXISTENCE, AND HIS CONVERSABLENESS WITH MAN.

AGAINST ATHEISM, OR THE EPICUREAN DEISM.

SERMON I.*

2 CORINTHIANS IV. 2.

COMMENDING OURSELVES TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

THESE words, joined with what goes before, run thus: "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience." The import of this text and context is exceeding plain. The apostle gives an account in them of his way in managing that work of the ministry, wherein he was engaged; that is, that his way of managing thereof was suitable to his end; his method to the design he drove at: he gives in the whole verse a double account of his way in managing his ministerial work—A negative account, and a positive.

1. A negative one, we have nothing to do in it, (as if he had said,) with the things of dishonesty or shame. Those things we have renounced; those hidden things that are wont to be accompanied with the pungent stings of shame and disgrace (if they should not be hid.) That is, we have nothing to do with any thing whereof we have cause to be ashamed. Let them hide themselves, and their designs, and work in the dark; let them wear masks and vizards, and transact their affairs under-ground, and with all possible privacy, who drive designs that they have reason to be ashamed of; whose business is either to trifle, or to do hurt; whose designs are either too low or little for wise men, or too base for good men. We, for our parts, design nothing but the service of God, the honour of Christ, and (as that which is subservient to these) the welfare of men. This is all that we aim at, that we may serve God, honour Christ, and bring in as many souls as we can unto him. We intend no worse to the world and the inhabitants of it, than to our utmost to make them good and happy Christians in this world, and glorious creatures in another world.

And, therefore, all we have to do may very well be transacted above ground, and upon the square; we have no occasion to walk in craftiness, to use fraudulent arts or tricks; our business requires it not; nor do we need to handle the word of God deceitfully; we do not falsify (so the word signifies) it, disguise it, clothe it with other colours; for as it naturally looks with its own, it serves our purpose best of all, if we give it no other appearance or representation, than that which is still genuine and most proper to itself. We do none of these things that are mentioned in the former part of the verse. And then comes,

2. The positive account in the latter part of the verse. "By manifestation of the truth," we make it our business to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Where the last of these words do sufficiently express that sense which I design to insist upon in some following discourses. And herein we see there is a principle in man, (here called conscience,) that renders him, in some measure, capable of judging what is proposed to him in the name of God, or under the notion of divine, —whether as such it ought to be received, or refused as not such. And here we have it signified to us, that there is in the great things of God, contained in the Gospel, or which the Gospel revelation doth suppose, a self-recommending evidence, by which such things do (as it were) approve themselves to that principle: and he lets us see that the faithful preachers of this Gospel have the whole business directly and immediately lying with the consciences of men; or that they are to apply themselves to that principle in man called conscience. And further, that this treaty with the consciences of men is to be managed under Divine inspection, under the eye of God.

And this being the import of the words considered in themselves; if also you consider them in their relation to what goes before; so the import of the context, and of them, as they fall into it, will be most plain. In the close of the foregoing chapter, the apostle having spoken above of the Gospel ministration, as contra-distinguished to that of the law, and most highly excelling it in point of light, and in point of efficacy; both of them glorious things, and in respect whereof he calls it the ministration of glory; so that, though that of mount Sinai was very glorious, yet this did so much excel it in glory, that the very glory of that was no glory, in comparison of the glory of this; for that by it we, as in a glass, (he so concludes the chapter,) beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. That *as* is not *similitudinis* but *identitatis;* it doth not signify likeness, but sameness: that is, there is so transforming a work wrought by the glory of the Lord shining through the glass, as doth speak its author to be the Spirit; such a work is done as none but the Divine Spirit could do; so that any one might see there was such a transformation wrought, as by the Spirit of the Lord is wont to be wrought: the Spirit doth like itself, as itself, it works as a Divine Almighty Spirit might be expected to do in this case. This is the account which he gives of the ministry, wherein he was engaged.

Now, in the beginning of this next chapter, it runs thus: —having received such a ministry as this, (so apt and so animated to serve its proper end and purpose,) "as we have received mercy, we faint not;" he resolves the vigour, and fortitude, and undauntedness of his heart, in this great work that was put into his hands, into the nature and kind of this ministry wherewith he was intrusted; considered in its own aptitude to serve its end, as it was managed and replenished with power and efficacy from the Divine Spirit. Having such a ministry, we faint not, we go on with all vigour and resolvedness imaginable in our work. And, thereupon, renounce all the hidden things of dishonesty, we go on with open face, as being well assured we shall be owned in our work one way or another; and make it our business hereupon, to apply ourselves immediately and directly to the consciences of men in the sight of God. And these several things, upon the whole, may be observed and taken up for our instruction and use from this portion of Scripture.

1. That the great things of the Gospel, or of religion in general, do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men.

2. That the business of the faithful ministers of this Gospel lies, first and most immediately, in a transaction with men's consciences about these things.

* Preached January 11th, 1690.

3. That this transaction with men's consciences about such things, is to be managed in the sight of God, under the inspection of the Divine Mind. And,

4. That thereupon, such as are engaged with uprightness and fidelity in this work, have the most vigorous and unfainting resolution and fortitude in it.

I begin with the first.

1st Doctrine. That the great things of the Gospel, or of religion, do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. Here,

1. It will be requisite to say somewhat concerning the principle of conscience. And,

2. Then to evince the truth of the assertion, that the great things of the Gospel, or religion, do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to men's consciences.

1. It is requisite to be said concerning conscience, thus much briefly; to wit, that it is a principle which is to be appealed to about such matters; and this doth, in the general notion of it, import an ability to judge, a certain dijudicative power. And it must be looked upon according to a double reference which it bears;—1st, To the matter which it is to judge about. And, 2ndly, To the Supreme Ruler under whom it is to judge, such things being to be judged of in the sight of God: for the latter of these references we shall come to speak to it under another observation; but for the former, we are to consider of it now.

Conscience, it doth import a power of judging, or an ability to judge about such and such matters; but what those matters are, we are more particularly to consider. In the general, it is a matter of duty about which conscience is to judge, or such things in reference whereunto we are one way or other under obligation to do, or not to do. And so it is the actions of men, that conscience is to judge about; as they are measurable by laws and rules to which they are properly and truly obliged. And so our actions may be considered two ways—either as to be done, or as done. And they come under the judgment and cognizance of conscience both ways—either as to be done, or as done: and so the judgment of conscience is two-fold, either concerning things, or concerning ourselves; for conscience hath both its prospect and its retrospect:—its prospect, that is, as it is to see our way before us, and to judge for us, Am I to do this, or am I to do that, or am I to let it alone; and decline doing such and such things? Here is the prospect of conscience; it is to discern and make a judgment aforehand, concerning the way that we are to take, to see our way for us. And then it hath its retrospect; when we come to make a stand, and look back upon our former course in general, or upon this or that particular action, Have I done well, or have I done ill? have I held a strict and regular course? or have I made a wrong or false step?

Now for conscience under this latter notion; that is, for the retrospect of conscience, I have had occasion to speak to it at large, in the hearing of many of you, from another scripture, that of 2 Cor. i. 12. This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience;—here is the exercise of conscience in reference to what is past, in reference to a course transacted already. So that you may plainly see our present subject doth not lead us to consider conscience under that notion at all; but only to consider it according to its prospect, as it doth *prospicere*. As it looks forward to discern and make a judgment;—Is such a course to be taken? or are such and such things directed to be complied with, yea or no?

And so the matter of which conscience is to judge is of this kind; to wit, what we are to do, or our actions as they are future, or to be done, must be taken with a latitude; so as not barely or chiefly to concern our external actions, the actions of the outward man; no, nor merely or only to concern those actions of the inward man, that proceed immediately from the will and from the affections, and from the executive power in the first rise of it; but also so as to comprehend and take in too, the actions of the mind and understanding;—all this is within the compass of this matter, about which conscience is to be exercised. We are not to consider what is to be done by the reflective faculty, but what is to be done by the directive faculty, the mind and understanding itself; that is, whether such and such things propounded to us, be to be assented to, yea or no. This is as much matter of conscience as any thing else; that is, the assenting or not assenting of our minds and understandings to such and such things; supposing they are things in reference whereunto we come under obligation; suppose that they are not such things wherein we are left at liberty to judge and think as we please, as we are in multitudes of theological speculations, wherein we are not laid under a law, as a main duty, to know, and understand, and observe, and mind such things. But this refers to such things wherein our giving our assent so and so, it is made matter of duty; or in reference whereunto, we are laid under an obligation. All that doth come as much within the compass of that matter, wherein conscience is to judge, as any thing else: that is, these acts of our minds, which are to be exerted and put forth immediately there, as they are part of our duty, about which we are accountable at last; so they are matters of conscience, and in reference whereunto conscience must, and ought to have too, a present exercise beforehand. Am I so or so to assent, or am I not? Thus, by manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

And so much is all that we need to say concerning the former of these heads, the principle that is to be applied unto, and to which the things of religion do, by a self-recommending evidence, approve themselves.

2. The second thing we have to do, is to evince and clear this to you, that there is such a self-recommending evidence in the things of religion, by which they become approved, or do approve themselves, to the very consciences of men. And here, that you may understand this aright, what it is that I am to prove and make out to you,—you are not to take it thus, as though every thing that lies within the compass of truth, and which we are accordingly to embrace and close with, were self-evident; so as at first sight it must necessarily beget a conviction in a man's judgment and conscience, that it ought to be entertained and closed with: that is not the meaning; every thing in religion that hath competent evidence with it, hath not that primary evidence as immediately, as soon, as it is heard and proposed, to command the mind to close in with it. But the meaning is this, that whereas there are some things of that kind that carry their own light so apparently in them as to captivate the mind into a present consent; there are many other things which are capable of being clothed with that light, or having that evidence added to them, by which they also may be enabled to recommend themselves. Every truth is not a first truth; but there is nothing which God hath made it necessary to the salvation of our souls to give entertainment unto, but that, if it be not evident in itself, it is capable of being so evidenced, as that it may, by that evidence (at least) that shall be added thereto, come to recommend itself to men's consciences, unless they be men so under the power of a vicious prejudice, and abandoned by God for their indulgence thereunto, that (as it follows in the next words) the Gospel is only hid to them because they are lost. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." And it is hid to them for having rebelled and sinned against the light of it so long; and this being the point, we come now to make it out to you, that the great things of religion which we are to give entertainment to, as necessary to our final welfare and blessedness, they are things that carry with them such a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men; they carry it with them, either as being primary self-evident truths, or as being capable of being evidenced by such things as are so; that is, either by their own light, or by such a light as may be imparted to them, and wherewith they may fairly admit to be clothed.

And the way of proving this, will be fittest and most proper, by giving instances; by instancing to you in divers of the most important things which we are required to give entertainment to, in order to our final salvation and blessedness;—and so to submit the matter to your own judgment, whether these things do not recommend themselves to conscience, yea or no; which is the best and most effectual way of proving any thing, when the inward sense of our mind is immediately directed to; we appeal to that immediately, so that you have the judgment in you

own breast or bosom, concerning this or that thing. Is it not clear, doth it not speak itself in my own conscience?

And the instances I shall give, will be especially under these four heads;—to wit, 1st, of Truths.—2ndly, Of Precepts.—3rdly, Of Prohibitions; and 4thly, Of Judgments.

I. Of Truths, you must understand that I am only going to give instances under each of these heads; otherwise, you must suppose that the whole body of theology would be the subject of our present discourse, as every thing would come in here that belongs to the substance of a theological treatise. And that (as I was saying) I may instance, first, in truths propounded to us, they will be of two sorts,—Positive and Argumentative;—Positive, those that we simply lay down; or Argumentative, those that in the way of argumentation may be annexed to the former, either, first, as reasons to prove them; or, secondly, as inferences and deductions proved by them. And this order and reference, which one truth may have to another, we are not to understand it so, as if there must be constantly that methodical relation, or a relation in that method; for the relation may be transposed, according as this or that particular discourse may be. But I shall give you instances of these together, or as now they may be represented to relate to one another; and so shall briefly instance to you;—1st, In those truths that do concern the original of all things.—2ndly, That do concern the apostacy and fall of man.—3rdly, Some that do concern the redemption by the Son of God; and 4thly, Some that do concern the final issue of all things.

1. For those that do concern the original of all things, take these,

(1.) That this world, (look upon it as one system, one complexion,) it is all a made thing.

This whole universe, it is all a made thing; why sure, either this hath such light with it, that any conscience of a considering man must presently say, it is true, in my conscience it is true, or it will easily be made evident. It is one of the great things (as being of natural revelation) that is mightily insisted upon by philosophers, as fundamental to all things else. You find that so the Deity was proved by the apostle in that text we so lately insisted on, Rom. i. 20. "The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen by the things that are made;" by this whole entire scheme and frame of made things. "By faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God," Heb. xi. 2. Thus largely too, doth the apostle discourse the efficiency of the Creator, Acts xvii. in a very great part of that chapter. And so the account is given in the very beginning of that revelation of the mind of God to man contained in the Bible, Gen. i. 1. It begins with the beginning of all things. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And so too doth that Gospel, (John i. 1-3.) wrote by the evangelist John; "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God; by him were all things made that were made." Now this is a matter that will let its light appear, if you will but revolve it a little in your minds, and think of it; for you manifestly see that all this world is full of changes; but there can be no change of a necessary Being; of a self-existing Being; what exists necessarily, and of itself, must be always as it is; whence that goes for a maxim with all that have set themselves to consider, *Eternum non patitur novum:* That which is eternal, admits of no innovation, nothing of new in it. And the matter would yet carry more convictive and clearer evidence to those that are less apt or less used to the exercise of thoughts, if they would but bring it to their own case; that is, suppose it be told you in particular, you are a creature, you are a made thing; let this be said to any body that hath the use of the ordinary understanding of a man with him, and it presently strikes the conscience; it is very true; I, in my own conscience, judge it true, I am a made thing. If any should hesitate at it, do but take a turn or two in thinking, and the matter would strike you with fresh light again and again. Why, what? Do not ye know that you have been in being but a little while? It is but so many years ago, and you were not; no such one as you was heard of in the world. Whatsoever began to be, must be a made thing. You did but lately begin to be, it is plain then you have been made; for nothing could of itself begin to be, or arise out of nothing of itself. That strikes every man's conscience that considers. Do not you, in your consciences, think and judge, that if nothing were in being, nothing could ever be in being? It is impossible that any thing should arise up of itself out of nothing. Therefore, if you begin to be, you are a made thing. And then,

2ndly, There are truths that will belong to this, by way of revelation and deduction. As then,

(1.) You have a Maker; every made thing must have a maker; do not your consciences tell you that this is true? In my conscience this is true, if I be a made thing, then I must have a maker. And then, again,

(2.) You may collect what kind of maker that must be. What kind of thing am I? I said, (among other things belonging to me,) there is a power of thought belonging to me; I have then a spiritual intellectual nature belonging to me; and therefore, certainly, such excellencies as I have in me, and as I find the rest of the creation hath in it, must be in the Maker of them all, much more eminently, and much more transcendently. And, therefore, as the apostle speaks, when he had said from a pagan,—"In him we live and move, and have our being; and we are all his offspring;" he immediately subjoins, (Acts xvii. 28, 29.) "For as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto silver and gold, or stone graven by the art of man." If there be such and such things that are the effects of an invisible Divine power of the Godhead; that is, if there be intellectual and spiritual beings, then he must be such a one; and then we are no longer (saith the apostle) to amuse and mislead ourselves with the foolish misconceit of a golden deity, or of a wooden and stone deity. The Deity must be such a being as hath such excellencies belonging to it, as we find are in his offspring. We find he hath an offspring of an intelligent and spiritual nature, and therefore, sure, such must he be. And again,

(3.) It will be further recollected, that if I am a made thing, a creature, and thereupon have a maker, I have also an owner too, as well as a maker; he that made me, must be my owner and proprietor; and to him I must belong, and in his power I am; and I must be at his disposal; and he may do with me what he will, and I am to do with myself only what he will have me do. Doth this not also strike conscience? Doth not this approve itself to every conscience of man? Am I a made thing? Then he that made me, owns, and he is to use me as his own. And again,

(4.) Am I a made thing, and do therefore appear to have a maker, and to have an owner? Then I have a ruler too; one that is to prescribe to me, and give me laws; to tell me what I am to do, and what not, through the whole of my course. This speaks to every conscience of man: every man that will use conscience in the case, must needs say, in my conscience, this is true; it cannot but be true. And again,

(5.) If I have such a maker, one that is the author and original of my life and being to me; he that is the author, must be the end of it; he that is the first to me, must be the last also. I am a creature, and a made thing; I did not come of myself into the world; and what could not be by itself, must not be for itself: Will not any man's conscience say this is true? Is not conscience smitten with light in this case? Methinks this doth recommend itself to my very conscience. I, that could never have come by myself into this world; I must not live in it for myself; it is inconsistent with the state of a creature to be its own end. Thus, in this kind, you may find there are things that concern the original of all things, that do by their own light recommend themselves to the consciences of men. And then,

2. Concerning the apostacy of man. To instance briefly therein, man is a fallen creature; he is not in the state that was original to him, or primitive, or wherein he was made. This, (one would think,) in the first speaking or hearing, should strike conscience with its own light; but if it should not with any that are more stupid and less considerate, let men but refer themselves to their own original state and nature, consider their nature abstract, and

then compare themselves with what they may easily discern and find of their present state and case.

The most general consideration that you can have of or concerning your own nature is, I am a sort of creature, that can think, that can use thoughts well; do but look to your present state, the common state of men according to that representation and description that is given us of it; "all the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart are only evil, and that continually," Gen. vi. 5. What? can any man imagine that God did make a thinking creature; endowed a creature with a power of thought, originally from the beginning, to think nothing but what was evil, and continually evil? And let but men see whether this be not a true account of themselves, that the Scripture gave so long ago. If they would but inspect and look into themselves, would they not be enforced to say, Have I not thoughts full of vanity, full of earthliness, full of impurity, from day to day? And, unless they be imposed and thrust in upon me, am I not a stranger to serious thoughts, to divine thoughts, to heavenly thoughts? Therefore the matter will again strike conscience with its own light. I am not only a creature, but a fallen creature; sure God never made me such a creature as I am become, as I have made myself; a creature, endowed with so noble intellectual powers, to debase myself; to make so sublime a thing, as an intelligent immortal mind, perpetually to grovel in the dust, and enslave itself to sensual and brutal lusts, and to mean and base designs that time measureth; and to leave myself to sink and perish eternally at length; so that to this very soul and spirit, for want of being employed about a good suitable to itself, and means and methods of compassing that, nothing but misery can be its portion. The thing speaks itself; I am a fallen creature, and as long as this continues my posture, and the state and temper of my mind and spirit, I may see the matter will issue ill at last. I am a degenerate creature, especially if it be considered how the stream and current of my thoughts and affections run out towards other things, as they stand in competition with the eternal, ever blessed God; for can any man think God made a creature to despise himself? to neglect himself, and to prefer the most despicable vanities before himself, when he hath made him capable of knowing, minding, adoring, and serving him? Thence also it would be collected, I may hence judge, whether also my present state is a safe state, or a bad state. It is a lamentable thing to be a fallen creature, fallen from its pristine excellency; and it may easily be collected hence, it is an unsafe state; for if I am fallen low already, I am still liable to fall lower; and I cannot tell whither I may fall, how low I may sink, and what finally will become of me; for I am falling lower and lower all the while I am a stranger to God, and a vassal to sensual inclinations. And I here again appeal, doth not all this speak to conscience? And doth not every one find in himself somewhat to which all this doth approve itself, and commend itself; so that he must needs say, In my very conscience this is true? I cannot now run through what I have to say hereupon. Pause hereupon a little, and consider what this is like to come to at last. If a man do, in a stated continual course from day to day, and from year to year, run counter to the judgment of his own conscience; if he lives continually a rebel against conscience, (for that is to be a rebel against God too,) what will it come to? Oh! might that be but seriously considered of, sure it would be of use to us, to bring us to a suitable disposition to hear of other things that will be of the greatest following concernment to us, in order to our future and eternal welfare.

SERMON II.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience.

THAT which we have in hand of the several things observed to you from the text and context, is, That the great things of religion do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. And we have shown, first, what that principle is, here called conscience. And, secondly, have touched upon the proof of the assertion.

The principle itself which is to be applied and appealed to, was considered as to its prospect and retrospect. As to the former, it is the business of conscience to see before us, to discern the way we are to go. If a man do not, with good conscience, proceed in his way; if he go wavering, and with a suspenseful mind, and in continual doubt, shall I, in so doing, do right or wrong? Such an one can never steer his course acceptably to God, or comfortably to himself; and, according to its retrospect, conscience is to make a stand, look back upon the way that a man hath taken, and thereupon make its judgment; whether he hath done aright, or wrong, in either respect, conscience is to judge; to judge of practice both as to what is done, and what is to be done: and it is principally conscience, in reference to its prospect, that we have to do with here: though it is one and the same principle that doth both; and the turn is quick and easy, from looking forward to what we are to do, to looking backward to see what we have done; and to see what may belong to us by way of reward, or by way of penalty hereupon.

And so we proceed to prove the assertion; and here again you were told, that both such things as are within the discovery of natural light, and which relate to religion; and such things too, as are supernaturally revealed one way or other, come to have this self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men; and this we proposed to prove to you, by some instances, upon which such an appeal is to be made to conscience itself, which is the clearest and most convictive way of proving any thing in the world; when we therein speak to the very inward sense of a man's own mind. And we propounded to give instances, under these four heads; to wit, of truths, of precepts, of prohibitions, and of judgments, or divine determinations concerning what is due unto a person, as he is found complying, or not complying, with the Divine preceptive will, in point of penalty or reward.

We did propose to give instances of truths which concern—1st, The beginning of all things.—2dly, The apostacy of man.—3rdly, His redemption by Christ;—and 4thly, The final issue of all things. And as to the two first of these, you had instances the last day. Now to go on,

3. To instance somewhat concerning the redemption of man by Christ; as that man, being in so lost and forlorn a condition, God did send his own Son down into this world to be a Redeemer and Saviour to him. This is a thing, not evident at first sight; it was not upon the first proposal discovered; it is not as soon as we hear it evident to any of us; but it may admit to be clothed with that evidence wherewith it must recommend itself to the consciences of such as shall consider. There is enough to make it plain, both who he was that came under the notion of a Redeemer into this world, and what he came for; that doing the part of a Redeemer, was really the design and end of his coming.

1. Who he was. That he was what he gave himself out to be, the Son of God; that he came down as a God, to dwell awhile in this world among men, having made himself like us, and become one of us. Though this, I say, was not evident at first view, there was enough to make it evident; that is, that he who was spoken of under the name of the Son of God, a thousand years before he came, accordingly came about such a time which was foretold: any man that should consider it, must needs say, In my conscience this is so; this is the Son of God. Psalm ii. 6. "I will declare the decree, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." This was said one thousand years before he came: and whereas, it was so plainly said, he should come about such a time as he did, within the time of the second temple, and that he did appear under such a character as could agree to none but this very person; when he come, his glory immediately shone as "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. It sparkled round about wherever he came, in whatsoever he spake, in whatsoever he did. We beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of

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the Father: this could be no other but the Son of God; this could not but speak itself; and this still cannot but speak itself in the consciences of those that do consider; and that he was afterwards testified unto, by a voice from heaven, from the excellent glory, again and again, in the hearing of a competent number, and at some other time, of very numerous witnesses;—This is my Son, my beloved Son, hear him; I recommend him to you, I set him over you, I make him arbiter of all your affairs, attend him, submit to him (hearing him imports so much.) This must speak in every conscience of considering men: this is very true, that he must be the Son of God! He that wrought such wonders in the world; restoring (upon all occasions as they occurred to him) hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, soundness to the maimed, and life to the dead, even by a word speaking; all these things being purposely recorded, that we might know that this Jesus was Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing, we might have life through his name, John xx. 31. He certainly was the Son of God. Here is sufficient evidence that doth speak the thing to any man's conscience that doth consider;—yea, he that did display such beams of his majesty and glory, living in flesh, that even the devils themselves were constrained to do him homage, under that notion, "the Christ, the Son of the living God;" surely this must tell any man's conscience, this cannot but be so, it must be so; he, whose death in the circumstances of it, (the sun darkened, the earth shaken, the graves opened,) extorted an acknowledgment from that pagan captain; "Verily, this is the Son of God:" he that afterwards was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the Spirit of holiness that raised him from the dead; upon all this, the matter speaks itself to the consciences of considering men;—this cannot but be the Son of God. And then,

2. That this great Person, this glorious Person, should die (as we know he did) upon a cross; that certainly speaks the end of his coming into the world, as a Redeemer; it could not be that one who was so plainly demonstrated to be the Son of God, should die for his own fault, or otherwise, than by his own consent, when it had been the easiest thing in the world to him to have avoided that fate, of dying like a malefactor on a cross. He had legions of angels at his command, and ways enough to have warded off the blow: it was neither by his default, nor without his consent, that he did die; this speaks itself evidently to every conscience of man. Then what was it for? It could be upon no other account than to redeem and save lost sinners: so that the design is thus generally evident; that is, is capable of being evidenced, made evident to any conscience of man that doth consider; and more especially that he died to procure the pardon of sin for poor sinners; died that they might be exempted and saved from the necessity of dying, that is, eternally: and that he died to recover men from under the power of sin, nothing is in itself more evident, if you consider this in the place wherein it stands, and which belongs to it in the series of Gospel doctrine; that is, it can never be, that so great, so wise, so holy a person as the Son of God was, should die to procure pardon for men, and yet leave them slaves to lust and sin. It is evident to every conscience of man, that if he died to save sinners, he died to sanctify, as well as pardon them and that he was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins both together, Acts v. 31. That his dying could not but have that design; that "he bare our sins in his body on the tree; that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness," 1 Peter ii. 24. Being healed, by his stripes, of the wounds, and distempers, and diseases, that infested our spirits; and this all carried so much evidence with it, that (as the apostle saith to the Galatians) they must be bewitched, that do not see and look into the inmost verity that lies in such truth; the very inwards of that truth. There is a centre of truth, a centring of truth, and if you do not refer the beams of that truth to the centre they proceed from, truly they are insignificant little things, and as little capable of subsisting apart, as the beams of the sun would be, cut off from the sun. You must make a rational design of this whole business, suitable to the wisdom of a Deity, and suitable to the vast comprehension of a Divine mind, or you do nothing. Then, I say, look upon these things as they do refer to one centre and juncture of Divine truth; and all runs into this, That Christ died upon this account, and with this design, that he might pardon and transform men together; that he might pardon them and renew them; pardon them and make them new creatures; pardon them, and divest them of the old man, and put on them the new man: for can any considering conscience of man admit the thought, that he died for sinners to procure them pardon, leaving them enemies to God as they were; leaving them with blind minds as they were; leaving them with natures poisoned with enmity and malignity against the Author of their beings as they were; and yet design these persons to blessedness? That were to design an impossible thing; to design that man, or that sort of men, to a blessed state in heaven, that have at the same time a hell within them. One that hath not a holy nature, hath hell within him. This speaks itself to any conscience of man that doth but consider;—do but think, and you must say, In my conscience it must be so; so that, if any do not subject their souls to the design of that Gospel that hath revealed this to them, it may be said to them, Oh! foolish creatures, that you should not believe this truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you; (Gal. iii. 1.) that have had such a representation of a crucified Christ, and never made it your business to know for what,—what was the design of it. I pray what did it finally aim at, but to Christianize the world, so far as his design should extend and have its effect? That is, to turn them into the image of that Christ, that was crucified for them; to make them pure, and holy, and heavenly creatures, and devoted to God as he was. And as the apostle adds here,—"If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:" if so plain a Gospel as this, that carries such evidence with it to the consciences of men, cannot yet be understood, it shows what a dreadful character these souls lie under; these must be struck with a penal blindness, and with a diabolical blindness withal, which is equivalent with this phrase of being bewitched; "in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not," as the next words are in the 4th verse of this chapter.

And so much, therefore, concerning the design of redemption by the Son of God, who came down unto this world upon this account, may be represented with that evidence, as to command any conscience of man that considers, into an assent: This cannot but be so, in my conscience this is so. And then,

4. Concerning the final issue of all: there is such truth shining, as much needs strike conscience, if it be attended to; it is clothed with that evidence, or easily admits to be, as must overpower the consciences of men into an assent. As,

1. Concerning the final issue of things; that this present state of things shall have an end. Any body that considers, cannot but say, in my very conscience it cannot but be so, it must be so; things are not to run on always sure as they now do. This state and posture of things certainly is not to be eternal; for it is a likely thing, that God will perpetuate his own dishonour, that he will have the generations of men in a continual succession to rise up one after another, full of alienation and estrangement from the Author of their being, and always to live upon the earth, while they live to no other purpose than to express their contempt of him that gave them breath? Will not this have an end? Sure any conscience of man must need say, This state of things will have an end, 1 Peter iv. 7. So that when this truth is spoken to us; "the end of all things is at hand," is approaching; (to that fore-seeing Spirit, that spake those words, and whose breath they were, the end of all things is at hand, just at hand; there is no conscience of man that allows itself to think, but must think so it will be, and this state of things cannot last always; though we are taught that while things do continue thus, it is with design, and it is from patience; and that design shall be accomplished, and that patience must have its limits and bounds. We are told it is not from negligence, but from patience; it is not that God doth neglect or disregard the state of things; it is not from supine ossitancy, but Divine patience. Why, in my very conscience, this is true, must every one say that considers; He that hath made such a world as this, and been the immediate Author of such a

sort of intelligent creatures in it, who are to have immediate presidence and dominion here in this present lower world; it is not to be imagined that he doth neglect the creatures that he hath made, and made after his own image; stamped with his own likeness; it is not likely he should be indifferent how they live, what they do, and what their posture and dispositions towards him are: any man that thinks, must needs say this is very true, it is God's patience, not his negligence, that such a sort of creatures are so long, from age to age, suffered to inhabit this world, and breathe upon this earth. Therefore when it is told us from the divine word, "The Lord is not slack concerning the promise of his coming, as some men count slackness; but is patient and long-suffering towards sinners, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" (2 Peter iii. 9.) such truth when it is laid before us, is so con-natural, so agreeable to the very conscience of man, that he must say, This sure is true, it falls within my mind; my mind gives it, it cannot be from negligence, or unconcernedness; but from wise designing patience, that things run on in this course so long. And then again,

2. This cannot but be evident concerning the end of all things, to those that consider, that sure their end will be glorious, suitable to their glorious beginning and glorious Author; that God will, in putting an end to things so like himself, and so, as it is worthy of God, there is no doubt but he will: any conscience of man must needs say so. God will do at length like himself; men have done all this while like themselves; they, like men, have transgressed, and perpetuated, to their utmost, their rebellions in this world against their rightful Lord; thus they have been in all things while doing like men; and God will at length do like God, no doubt but he will. There can be in him no variableness, nor shadow of turning; his nature alters not; he is the I Am, and is what he is; and therefore, there will be an issue of all things, that will demonstrate, to all apprehensive creatures, the glory of the great Lord of heaven and earth; even to the highest, and in ways most suitable to himself; that is, it shall go well with all that have been sincere lovers of him—devoted to him, studious to please him; that valued his favour, and despised it not as the most do; but for the rest, this world, the stage of their wickedness, where they have been sinning from age to age, is reserved on purpose for the perdition of ungodly men; and reserved unto fire for that end and purpose, 2 Peter iii. 7. That things will end thus, as to all those that know not God, and were in conspiracy against him and his Messiah; saying, "Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us," Psalm ii. 3. And that never turned, never made their peace; that the day that comes for them, it must be to consume them in the common ruin, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all things therein be consumed and burnt up; for this world is reserved unto fire, for the perdition of ungodly men as we see the expressions are, 2 Peter iii. 7. And thus are they to have their perdition in those flames, that is, that the fire of the Almighty, which will at last catch hold of this world, whereby the heavens shall be shrivelled up as a scroll, and pass away with great noise; then it will be seen, that both ways God hath done like himself; he hath done suitably to an excellent, great, and glorious majesty, long despised by the work of his own hands.

Now, when these things come to be represented, they do carry in them that evident appearance of verity and truth, that more than very similitude, that every conscience of man must say, These things are very agreeable to truth, cannot but be true. There is a con-naturalness between the soul of man and truth, between the mind of man, the conscience of man that is to judge of truth, so that any must say that consider, It cannot but be thus; in my very conscience it will be so. Then to go on,

2. To the next head, that of precepts; wherein, as in reference to the former, it was the business of conscience to discern of truth and falsehood; so in reference to this, it will be the business of conscience to discern of right and wrong; but here we shall only mention those two great comprehensive precepts,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might, and with all thy mind, and shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," Deut. vi. 5. Matt. xxii. 37. Precepts (as our Herbert said of them) as dark as day; having no more of darkness in them than is in the brightest day, or the clearest light. What? do not these prove themselves to every conscience of man? that He who is most good, and contains in himself all excellency, all perfection, all glory, all blessedness; and which he is ready to communicate to receptive capable subjects, should be loved by me with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my might, and with all my mind; for in my heart and conscience it ought to be so, any conscientious man will say.

And then, that he whom God hath set in a certain order and rank as a fellow-creature; a creature of the same order, having the same nature that I have, and the same natural capacities, both as to knowledge and enjoyment; should be loved by me as myself: Do not my fellow-creatures of the same order deserve as much love as I do deserve? And, therefore, can it be a reasonable thing that I should cut off myself from the community to which I do belong? that order of creatures in which I am, and live only within a private course of my own, apart from the rest of mankind? It cannot be, I must love my neighbour as myself; whatsoever there can be in my nature, that must draw and attract love, must be in them that have the same nature, that have the same capacities that I have; so that every one that considers, must say, this is true, even to the light and sense of my own conscience; thus it ought to be; this is the very right of the case; and he that laid this law upon me, doth by this law require no more than the very nature of the thing requires.

But then considering that apostate, lapsed creatures cannot arrive hither to this loving of God above all, with all the heart, all the soul, all the might and mind; neither can there be that redintegration of kind dispositions and affections, mutually towards one another, that is required in that other precept; having all lapsed and fallen, without a reparation and renewal of their frames, without having their frame repaired towards God and towards one another; this makes the Gospel necessary to come in, in reference to fallen lost creatures. This was the original duty of man, and still is incumbent upon him as a just duty; but he cannot come at it till there be a reparation and renewal of his nature; and for this the Gospel (as was hinted) doth contain prescriptions, or a prescribed course. Now as to God, the Gospel runs upon duty, suitably to our lost state, under two heads,—Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; this law lying with its eternal invariable obligation upon all intelligent nature, upon every reasonable creature,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."—Aye, so I ought, saith conscience; but I have not done it, I have been a rebel against him; a thing very inconsistent with dutiful love. I have been a stranger and an alien to him, alienated from the life of God; a very inconsistent thing with communion love, with conversible love. What then is to be done? here is no returning to my duty and pristine state again, for a fallen creature, for one that hath degenerated and been in a state of enmity and rebellion against God, (as I have been,) but by Repentance. I can never come to love again till I repent. Here is that, therefore, which the Gospel does enjoin in the first place,—Repentance towards God. I was under an obligation to him, as I was the work of his hands; and as a reasonable creature, I was to love him with all my heart, soul, might, and mind, and I have been a rebel to him, and an enemy against him; but through his grace I repent of it; I repent of it with all my heart, and with all my soul. And by repentance, it is, that the soul is to return into the exercise of this vast all-comprehending love, towards the all-comprehending good; it comprehends all our duty towards him, who comprehends in himself all excellencies, majesty, glory, and felicity. Now will not any considering man's conscience say to this, It cannot but be so; that he who was under so natural an obligation to love God with all his heart, soul, might, and mind; and hath been disloyal, an enemy and false to him, and a rebel against him, ought to repent of it? In my very conscience he ought; every man that considers will say so. What? have I been a traitor to him that gave me breath, and shall I not repent of it? or doth that Gospel enjoin me a wrong-

ful thing that calls me to repentance? And shall I not be a vile creature if, being so called, I will never repent; but bear within me an impenitent heart, a heart that cannot repent, as that fearful expression is, Rom. ii. 14.? The words carry that in them, which may affright a congregation, and strike the hearts of all that hear them with terror. A heart that cannot repent! A heart that could sin, that would offend and affront God, but that cannot repent; repentance is hid from it! To the sense of any man's conscience, this is a horrid creature that hath been an offender all his days, but will never repent. The Gospel calls him to repentance; the gentle alluring voice of the Gospel; but he will not repent. This carries evidence with it to the consciences of men, what there is of right, and what there is of wrong, in this matter.

And so for Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, doth not the thing carry evidence with it to the consciences of men, That he who is to make up (upon such terms as you have heard) that which otherwise must have been an everlasting breach between God and the sinner, should not have the soul, when called thereto in the Gospel, and being now in its return to God, take him in its way, and pay a dutiful homage to him whom God hath set over all the affairs of lost souls, to be to them a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins? But in order thereunto, here it must be begun, for the poor soul thus to own him in the high authority of his office. This is the homage, which is, in sum, the meaning of faith in Christ; the paying deference to him whom God hath set over all the affairs of souls: that is, by resigning themselves up to him: that is the homage that you owe him. And herein lies the substance of faith,—Gospel faith, self-resignation, a self-surrender, whereby you put yourselves absolutely into the hands of Christ, and own his high authority, as he is a Prince and a Saviour. And is not this the most reasonable thing in all the world? Doth not every conscience of man say so when he considers, If ever I will be reconciled to God, it must be by the blood of Christ; and he hath an office over this lost world, founded in his blood? And shall I not come and pay my deference to him at the footstool of that throne which God hath set up for him? When he hath said to the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," shall not I come and pay my homage to this Son of God, at that throne? (Psal. iv. 5.) the Redeemer's throne; and say, Lord, being now convinced of this state of my case, and being reduced to this, to bethink myself of returning to God, and I know there is no coming at him but by thee; and this throne is set up in the way for returning souls; I therefore come and pay my homage at this throne; that is, I come and resign my soul, give up myself, put myself into thy hands to be under thy conduct: thou didst die the just for the unjust to bring them unto God; and now I come to thee to be brought, I submit to thy authority, I commit myself to thy grace. This is faith, Gospel faith, and can any thing more approve itself to the conscience, than the right and equity of doing so? Is it not a righteous thing, and a just thing, that this law should be laid upon returning sinners? If you go to God immediately,—No, saith he, go and do homage to my Son; there is no coming to me, but in him; and when you do so, when you thus receive the Gospel, take hold of the Gospel covenant, take him for Lord and Christ, and resign and give up yourselves. This sums up that duty, and the subservient duty of repentance towards God, as the way that leads to the end. And see now, whether the Gospel of our Lord, both as to the truths of it, and as to the precepts of it, do not carry with it a self-recommending evidence unto the consciences of men.

SERMON III.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

THE matter is in itself so obvious, that this self-recommendation is not thus spoken of the persons, personally considered, but with reference to their work of dispensing the Gospel of Christ, and holding forth the great things contained in it: that that laid our ground fairly enough in view, for that which I mainly intended to insist upon from these words, and that is,

That the great things of religion do carry in them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. And here, having shown you what is meant by conscience, what that principle is that is to be applied unto, appealed unto, in this work of ours; we come to evince to you the truth of the thing, that there is that self-recommending evidence in the great things of religion, even to the very consciences of men. We propounded (as you know) to prove it by instances, and we have proved it,

1. By instances under the head of truths, or the doctrines unto which assent is to be given; and we have proved it,

2. By instances under the heads of precepts, duties, enjoined to be done;—and now we shall further prove it,

3. By instancing in prohibitions of sin to be avoided; and in them you will find the same recommending evidence to men's consciences, if such prohibitions, as do but come under your notice, be considered a little; as that general one, "Oh, do not that abominable thing which I hate," Jer. xliv. 4. What convictive light doth it carry to every conscience of man, that allows himself to think and consider! I, a creature, the work of God's own hand, in whose power and pleasure it was, whether I should ever be or not be, whether ever I should draw a breath, or see the light in this world, yea or no; that I being lately sprung into being, by his pleasure and vouchsafement, should allow myself despitefully to do the thing he hates, and that he hath declared himself to hate? How can this, (if men do think,) how can it but strike conscience? What! to spite the God of all grace; Him, whose nature is love itself, goodness itself, kindness? For me to do the thing that I know he hates, how is it possible but this should recommend itself to conscience, if men do not shut the eye and stop the ear of conscience, that it shall not be allowed to discharge any part of its proper office and work?

But to descend to more particular prohibitions, there the thing will be still plain; do not live after the flesh, if you do, it is mortal to you! "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," Rom. viii. 13. What evidence doth this carry with it to conscience! Take the prohibition and the enforcement together, as we should do in the former instances; Do not this, do not the thing I hate. When we do know ourselves to be a sort of compound creatures, made up of flesh and spirit, can we be ignorant which is the nobler part? Can any man's conscience allow him to think, that flesh ought to rule; that it belongs to the baser flesh to be the governing thing? "Do not walk after the flesh;" doth not the thing carry its own evidence with it, that we should not; that the mind and spirit should not be enslaved to so base a thing as flesh?

Again, "Do not grieve the Spirit of God, do not quench the Spirit; (1 Thess. v. 9.) what evidence doth this carry with it to any conscience of man! Our own hearts tell us, if we consider, we need a guide in this wilderness; we need an enlightener, we need a sanctifier, we need a quickener, we need a comforter within, an internal one of all these. What? is it reasonable to think; doth not the matter speak itself to our consciences; when it is said to us, whatsoever ye do, do not grieve the Spirit? (Eph. iv. 3.) You are lost if you do; what desolate creatures will ye be if you do! what forsaken wretches! You will run yourselves into a thousand miseries and deaths, if you be forsaken of that Spirit; your end can be nothing but perdition, if you be not under the constant conduct of that Spirit. I might preach to you thus, upon as many several texts as I give you instances in this case, to show the truth of this one thing, how God doth speak to men's consciences in the Gospel dispensation.

When again he saith to men, Love not this world, nor the things of this world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; (1 John ii. 15.) that is, do not so love this world, as thereby to stifle, as thereby to

* Preached January 25th, 1690.

exclude, the love of God, that it shall and can have no place in you. Doth not this carry its own light with it, its own evidence? What a foolish wretch art thou that thinkest this world can be to thee in the room and stead of God! Can this world be a god to thee? Can this world fill up God's vacant places? What a pitiful, sorry god wilt thou find it in a few years or days? Thou who dost turn God out of thy soul, and wilt have it filled and replenished only with this world, doth not this carry with it conviction to conscience? What can, if this do not?

Again, do not take more care for this temporal life, than for spiritual and eternal life; or to give it you in the words of our Saviour, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth; but for that which endureth to life eternal, which the Son of man shall give," John vi. 27.

Doth not this carry its own evidence to you with it? That is, when I know I have but a short temporal life; which, do what I can, will soon come to an end; and there is an eternal state of life which must come afterwards. I know I am a creature made for eternity, and for an everlasting state. Doth not this carry its own evidence with it, when I am forbid to take more care for this mortal life, than for life eternal? when I am forbidden to make more solicitous provision for this perishing life, than an immortal life? Doth not the reason of the thing speak itself in my conscience? But I go on,

4. To the last head which I proposed to give instances of. We have gone upon Divine truths, Divine precepts, Divine prohibitions; we shall only instance further, upon the head of Divine judgments, or judicial determinations. I cannot call what I intend by a fitter name, or nearer to that of the apostle, who knowing the judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death,—here is the Divine judicial determination, *de debito retributionis*, what is justly to be retributed to those that are found to disobey the stated known rules of his government. His judgments in this sense, they are a light that goeth forth, Hosea vi. 5. (to borrow that expression;) they carry their own convictive evidence with them to the consciences of men. How equal they are! take those two in the general, that we have confronted to one another. "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings: Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him," Isaiah iii. 10, 11. Doth not this speak itself, that when we know the world is divided into good and bad, into righteous and wicked, it should fare ill with them that did ill, and well with them that did well? Doth not this carry its own evidence with it to conscience, that God should render to every man according to his works; that is, the course of his work, and, consequently, the habitual inclinations from whence they proceed: every thing working as it is, and men working, as they are, either according to what by nature they were, or according to what by grace they are become; so they ought to be judged? When we know the world is divided into two parts, under two great parents, as the apostle calls them the children of God, and the children of the devil, herein are the children of God manifest, and the children of the devil, 1 John iii. 10. These two families, these two sorts of posterities, do divide the world to every man's sense; and the world being so divided, is it to be expected that God should deal with his own children and the devil's children alike? Let conscience be appealed to in this case; they that live here all their days in this world under the law, and according to the dictates of the prince of the darkness of this world, despising God, hating his ways, throwing him out of their thoughts, making it only their design to please themselves, and do the devil's work; when we know there is such a sort of men in this world, and that there is another sort that have given up themselves to God in Christ, have taken hold of Christ and of God in him, to be theirs; being born, "not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" (John i. 13.) as all they that do receive Christ are: when we know, I say, there is such a contradistinction between a race and a race, a family and a family, can any man in his conscience expect that God should deal with all alike? And therefore, when you have particular determinations to the particular distinguishing characters of the one sort, and of the other, the equity and reasonableness of the determination cannot but speak itself in every man's conscience that doth consider the case. As, for instance, the love of Christ: it is determined on the one hand, "Grace be upon all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," (Ephes. vi. 21.) and, on the other hand, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha;" (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) an execrable thing, an accursed thing, till the Lord come to plead his own cause and quarrel himself. To what conscience of man doth not the equity of this determination or distinguishing judgment appear and recommend itself? What! do we think (when men must have their final felicity from the blessed Judge, if ever they be happy) that he is to dispense equally to them that love him, and to them that hate him? And so, when the business of obedience to his Gospel, the laws of his kingdom, is mentioned as the contradistinguishing character to that of disobedience and rebellion. He will be "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him," (Hebrews v. 9.) and will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that obey him not, 2 Thess. i. 8. Doth not this distinguishing judgment approve itself to any man's conscience? That when every man must be beholden for this salvation to Christ, the eternal Son of God, into whose hands and power this world is put, the whole universe, indeed, all the affairs of heaven and earth; do you think he will make no difference at the last between them that obeyed him, subjected themselves to that vast just power of his, and they that lived in continual rebellion against him, and defiance to his power and authority?

And so, if we should take the determination which is given us, concerning the stated method of God's final procedure in that which is called the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment; to wit, that to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, he will give eternal life; (Rom. ix. 7.) such as, by patient continuance in well-doing, do steer their course answerable to so high a hope and expectation of honour, glory, and immortality, said God, nothing but eternal glory and blessedness will answer the enlargedness of the capacity, desires, and aspirings of these souls; they shall have their seeking. These are a sort of souls that breathe after nothing but the celestial glory and felicity, being refined from the mixture, dross, and baseness, of this earth: no terrene good will satisfy them, or serve their turn; for they are all for heaven, all for glory, and immortality: I will give them eternal life. This is the judgment that is made aforehand; eternal life shall be theirs. But then there is another sort, that are contentious, and will not obey the truth; (Rom. ii. 8, 9.) that is, that are contentious against the truth they should obey, and that should govern them: no, they will not be governed by truth; they will be governed by lust, by terrene inclinations, which bear them downwards towards this earth: "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man:" it will be upon them, every soul of them, that do evil, whether Jew or Gentile; because there is no respect of persons with God, Romans ii. 11. What can more approve itself to the judgment of conscience than this determination doth? Yea, God hereupon makes his appeal to men: Are not my ways equal? Ezek. xviii. 25—29. Be you, your very conscience itself, in the judgment-seat, and let that pronounce, Are not my ways equal? what conscience of man but must submit here, and fall in with the choir of them that say, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways," Rev. xv. 3. There is nothing to be said against all this; every conscience of man must yield and submit to God in this case.

It remains to say somewhat by way of use.

1. We learn hence, that upon the whole there cannot but be much sinning against light in this world; and especially under the Gospel, where there are those so clear, evident, and convictive things, that are insisted upon so much from time to time, which even make their own way to men's consciences; though through them they do not make their way to their more abstracted hearts. Do but appeal to yourselves; what are the things that you hear of in these assemblies from one Lord's day to another? Are they not the things as I have now given you instances

in, and in former discourses? Do not you hear of such things most? And do not these things speak themselves in your very consciences? Yet is it not apparent that the course and tenor of men's lives run counter to the tendency of all these things? Oh, then, how apparent and insolent sinning against light is there among us in our days! A fearful thing to think of! that men should in their consciences know that such and such things are true; and that, if they be true, they must be considerable; if they be true, they are as important truths as can be thought of; and yet they will not think of them. They know such and such things are commanded; but they never set themselves about them. Such and such things are forbidden, but they take no care to avoid them. Such and such judgments are fixed and determined by the righteous will of God, and they take no care; have no forethought to make a title clear to the reward that is promised, or to avoid the penalties threatened. What sinning against light is all this! And what is the issue of all this like to be?

2. You may further see hence, that if man be so capable a creature, through his having that principle settled in him of judging of things; to wit, truths, precepts, prohibitions, divine determinations or judgments, as you have heard, then he is as capable a creature, by the same principle, of judging of himself, and of his own case hereupon. I pray consider it, it is one and the self-same principle by which I am first to judge, Is such a thing a part of divine truth, and to be received accordingly? and afterwards to judge, Have I received it accordingly; yea or no? And so, in reference to the other several heads, it is but the same principle that I am to use, and put in exercise both ways. If I am a creature capable of judging of truth, of duty, of sin, of desert in general; then I am capable of judging somewhat of the state of my own case hereupon, in reference to all these. And pray let that be considered only in the way to what is further to be considered.

3. It is, then, a very strange kind of stupidity, that men do not more generally lay themselves under judgment, one way or another, when they have this principle in them, that is so capable of doing, and the proper direct use whereof (at least) is to do it. It is strange that men should spend all their days amidst the light by which they must be finally judged, and never go about such a thing as the forming of a preventive judgment concerning themselves. And yet we are told that this is the only way of escaping the severity of a destructive doom at last from the Supreme Judge. "Judge yourselves, and ye shall not be judged." That people should pass away their days, and under a Gospel, and never find time (as it is, God knows, with too many) to ask themselves the question, Into what sort and class of men am I to cast myself? There are those that do belong to God as his own children, the members of his family, his special domestics. Am I of that family, or am I not? Do I belong to God, or do I not? Do the characters of a righteous person or a wicked one belong to me? Am I one that fears God, or one of them that fear him not? that love him, or that love him not? Am I (in short) a regenerate person, or an unregenerate? a convert, or an unconverted one? It is strange how men can dream away their time under a Gospel as we live, and never ask themselves such questions as these are, in reference to so great and important a case; let one day come and go after another, and take it for granted that things are well, without ever inquiring. To what purpose, I pray, is there such a principle in the souls of men as conscience, when this signifies nothing? It is thus tied and chained up from doing any thing of its proper business in their souls. If it be brought into true light, (as it may be with some, if their case do infer so,) it will speak comfortably to them, if their case doth admit it. But if you have no converse with your own consciences, have nothing to do with them, never converse with them, never commune with them, they never speak to you one way or other; you have neither comfort from them, nor are awakened by them. But again,

4. We further note to you, that sure, upon the whole matter, man is become a very degenerate creature. The state of things with men living under the Gospel, gives so much the more clear and certain judgment of the state of things with men more generally and indefinitely considered; for if they that live under the Gospel, notwithstanding the clearer representation of things there which are of the greatest concernment to them, and the most earnest inculcation of such things by them who have that part incumbent on them to open and preach the great things of the Gospel among them; I say, if among these there be so deep a somnolency, the spirit of a deep sleep poured out; if even these men are generally unconcerned, and do not care what becomes of their souls, and what the state of things is between God and them, certainly upon the whole matter, man must needs be a very degenerate creature, to have such a principle of conscience in him to so little purpose, so much in vain, which was designed in his original and instituted state to be his guide and conductor all along through the whole of his course; but now-a-days it doth not, for the most part, or at least not in reference to men's greatest concernment, the state of their affairs and case God-ward, and as things lie between them and him. And again,

5. We may learn wherein the degeneracy of man doth generally and principally consist and lie, and what is the most mortal ail and evil that hath befallen men by the fall, that is, the interruption and breach of the order between the faculties, that which should lead and guide, and those which should obey and follow; here lies the principal maim and hurt of the soul by the fall; it lies in this chiefly, that the order is battered and broken between faculty and faculty, between the practical judgment (which is the same with conscience) and the executive power, which should act and do according to the dictate of that judgment or conscience: here is the maim; it doth not lie so much in this, a mere ignorance, or (suppose that) in a mere inaptitude to know, or an incapacity of knowing the things that are needful to be known; but it lies chiefly in this, that the things we do know, they signify no more with men, than if they knew them not; the inferior powers do not obey and follow the superior: as, for instance, now, among us, who believe the Bible to be the word of God, and who do profess the Christian name, take a man that is under the dominion of this or that particular lust in his nature, it is plain this lust carries him against a thousand texts of Scripture; What will a text of Scripture signify to a man that is under the violent hurry or impetuosity of a lust? Though conscience tells him, at the same time, this is a divine word, a divine dictate; this word is from God, and it speaks like itself in my conscience, that it is a divine word. Alas! how little doth a text, or multitudes of texts of Scripture, prevail in such a case, when a man's heart is carried by the power of such a lust? "The lusts of your fathers ye will do," (John viii. 44.) as our Saviour told the Jews; so that is the true state of man's case, naturally: a degenerate creature he is; and herein lies his degeneration, or principal maim, that he hath got by his fall; the order is broken between the faculties, insomuch that now a man's knowing, or having the notion of this or that thing to be done, or not to be done, signifies no more to him, than if there were no such notions, no such knowledge; when there is a competition between the judgment of conscience, and an inclination of heart, you may lay a thousand to one on the side of the inclination, that it carries it: here is our maim, and it is fit we should understand, and needful we should consider, where it is, and what is our hurt by the fall: we see our way, but have no inclination to go in it: we see what we should do, but we do not do it; like here in the poet,—"*Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequar;*"—the same maim that pagans have complained of, I see the better, and do the worse. It were a sad case if we should lie under such an evil as this is, and never know it, never take notice of it, where our hurt lies, and where our cure must be wrought. And that is the next thing,

6. I would infer, to wit, wherein regeneration most principally lies: when a man understands what it is to be degenerate, he will the better know what it is to be regenerate; it must lie in this, in the exalting the law of the mind into its proper dominion and government, the placing that upon the throne which is to beget a man spirit of spirit; whereas, before, he was only begotten flesh of flesh; for when flesh is a ruling and governing nature, then

the man is called flesh; but when the spirit is become the ruling and governing thing, (which is the new nature,) then he is called spirit; and he is made spirit before he ought to be called so. And this is the effect of regeneration, the creating of a man's spirit again, that is, restoring him to himself. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit," John iii. 6. When a man's light becomes a vital thing, a powerful efficacious thing, then he is a child of light. "You were darkness, now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light," Eph. v. 8. And we are never to look on ourselves as regenerate, till it comes to this; till the Divine Spirit have exalted our spirits into their proper dominion; till there be a principle begotten that shall make divine discoveries significant; when it may be said, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death," Rom. viii. 2. And thereupon we may infer,

7. That a degenerate and an unregenerate man is a miserable creature; as he is a most depraved creature, so he is a most wretched creature; for, take the state of his case, as things are with the unregenerate man, his soul is the seat and stage of a continual war, to no purpose. Indeed, the soul of a saint in this world is the seat of war, but it is a war to a good purpose; a war wherein he finally prevails, and wherein he is habitually victorious all along. But the soul of an unregenerate man is the seat of war in vain; for the right principle is always worsted, perpetually worsted; there is not a war as there is in the regenerate, in the faculties taken separately and apart, as in the very heart itself, and in the will itself. The regenerate person hath a war; there is a love to God, with its opposite; but that love is the prevailing inclination; there is faith with unbelief; but then faith is habitually prevailing in the regenerate person. In the unregenerate person there is no such thing as faith in the heart, love in the heart; but a total unbelief, a total enmity, and total fearlessness of God, and a total vacancy of desire after him, and delight in him; but there is light in his conscience: his conscience tells him God is worthy to be loved, worthy to be desired, worthy to be delighted in, but there is nothing in his heart correspondent, so that this soul is a continual seat of war, in vain, and to no purpose; for the bent of his heart always carries it against the light of his mind and conscience; so that, although he doth acknowledge in his conscience that God is the chief good, he always keeps off from him; that he is the highest authority, yet he always disobeys him; never fears him, never stands in awe of him; as such, therefore, this sort of creature is a miserable creature, he is a creature composed for torment, having a principle in him that always tells him what he should do, but no principle to enable him so to do; so that continually he doth against what he should do. This is as much as is possible to be made for torment; but then remember, it is self-composed; you have made yourselves so: if this be the case with any of us, we have fought against the grace and Spirit of Christ, by which this sad case should have been redressed: and we have habituated ourselves to a course of living after the flesh, by which flesh hath got dominion over conscience; whereupon conscience can never come to rule it, but dictates to it always in vain. Again.

8. They are very happy souls in whom there is a reconciliation brought about between the light of their consciences and the temper and inclination of their hearts, by the conforming of the latter to the former. This creates a heaven within them, when a poor soul sees its way, and walks in it; sees that God ought to be loved, and he loves him; that he ought to be trusted, and trusts in him; that he ought to be delighted in, and delights in him: this is heaven on this side heaven, this is heaven under heaven, when conscience is the governing thing in his whole conversation; so that he doth not consider, Wherein shall I advantage myself by this and this negociation and affair? increase my estate and my condition in this world? He doth not, finally and ultimately, consider that, but how shall I manage this affair to please God, so as I may approve myself to him, and so as that my own heart and conscience shall not reproach me about it? O happy man that walks by this rule! This is the new creature's rule; they that walk according to it, peace shall be upon them, and mercy upon the Israel of God, Gal. vi. 16. When a man hath been busy about his affairs, he may be abroad all day, and can come home and visit his tabernacle at night, and not sin, Job v. 24. Oh blessed thing! What can be the meaning of that? Can any man suppose it a sin to go home to his own house? No, but that he can visit his tabernacle without conscience of sin. I have kept a good conscience this day, blessed be God: it may be I have met with temptations, to be in a debauch by those that would have insulted over the weakness of my flesh; it may be I have, but God hath kept me. Blessed be God, now I can visit my tabernacle without sin, and lay me down in rest and peace; I can visit my tabernacle without spot, without any such spot. What a blessed thing is it, when God brings about that reconciliation between him and them, and where the peace is kept and continued between a man and his own conscience, not by stupifying of conscience, (a fearful thing that is,) but by the conforming of a man's heart and inclinations and ways thereunto.

SERMON IV.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

WE have had occasion several times of considering the context; "We all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord;" so ends the foregoing chapter. "Therefore, (so begins this chapter,) seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." You know what observations have been recommended to you from this portion of Scripture, principally from these last words, but relatively considered, as well as absolutely. As,

1. That there is such a principle in every man, as that of conscience, unto which the great things of religion do carry with them a self-recommending evidence.

2. That the business of the Gospel ministry doth lie very principally in a transaction with the very consciences of men.

3. That this transaction is to be managed in the sight of God. And,

4. That from all this proceeds, in very great part, the unfainting vigour and resolvedness of faithful ministers in their work.

We have insisted upon the first of these; we will now proceed as far as we can with the rest, and begin with the next in order; which is,

2d Doctrine. That the great business of the Gospel ministry doth very principally lie in a transaction with men's conscience. We are here to show you, 1st, wherein this transaction lies; and 2dly, to show that the work of the ministry lies in it, and must so do very principally.

1st, Wherein this transaction with the consciences of men doth lie. Why,

1. In dealing with men about such things chiefly as do most directly come under, and as are most apt to take hold of, their consciences; in insisting (I say) chiefly upon such things are as most likely to fasten upon conscience, and take hold of that.

2. In endeavouring to set such things in as clear light as may be, to represent them as advantageously as we can, that conscience may have nothing to do but to discern the very evidence of the things. This is plain, this is clear: to represent things so that at first sight they may be assented and, submitted unto as much as in us lies. And,

* Preached February 8th, 1690.

3. To appeal hereupon to conscience about it; that is our business, recommending ourselves to every man's conscience; that is what we have to do, *provocare*, to call into conscience: "Come, do thy part; see if there be not evidence in this and that truth; see if there be not equity in this or that precept; see if there be not wickedness or darger in this or that sin; see if there be not righteousness and reasonableness in this or that judgment or determination, that we find recorded in the word, and pronounced in reference to such and such cases." These (you know) were the four heads instanced in, to let you see the things of religion that do carry in them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. Our business must be to appeal to conscience about such things; to call upon it to do its office, to judge and pronounce, Are not these things so? And,

4. To endeavour to awaken conscience, supposing it drowsy and somnolent, as, God knows, it is too much with the most; when we have appealed to conscience, to appeal again, as that petitioner did to that great prince: "I appeal from thee," said she.—"From me! (said the prince.) Whither will you appeal?"—"I appeal (said she) from you, asleep: you were asleep just now, while I was telling my story: I appeal from you asleep, to you awake." So we are to appeal from conscience to conscience; from conscience asleep to conscience awake. That must be our business, to endeavour, as much as in us is, to awaken conscience to the exercise of its office in that great business, that we recommend ourselves to it about. And,

5. To answer what we can the cavils and foolish counter-reasonings of carnal hearts against truth and against duty, or in favour of any way of sin, that the litigating humour may (as much as in us is) be repressed, and men's spirits be subdued, that they may have no more to say; that their mouths may be stopped, and they laid under a restraint to lie down silenced and convinced before the Lord. And,

6. To urge conscience to its final answer, to its determination upon the whole, as there is such a thing as an answer of conscience to be finally given in particular cases, that we may apply ourselves to men about. And if conscience be rectified and sanctified, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, it will be brought at length to give a good answer, a complying answer, a yielding answer; as that which the apostle speaks of: "A like figure whereunto, (having spoken of the ark before, that saved Noah and his household from perishing in the universal inundation,) even baptism, doth now save us; not the putting away the filth of the flesh, (not the external sign,) but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. iii. 21. The main and principal thing that we do apply ourselves to men, and the consciences of men, about, is, to bring them back to God; that is, whereas the bond was broken between God and men, we would fain have them under new bonds, we would fain there should be a redintegration, that they may come into a covenant relation to God, through Christ again; of such a covenant entered into between God and the returning souls of men, baptism was a seal; the confirmation. It is not the external part of baptism that will avail a man any thing, not the washing away the filth of the flesh; why, will not that do? No, but that whereunto baptism is to seal; that is, the answer of a good conscience. When sinners are dealt withal, 'Come, will you yet have God to be your God,—God the Father, Son, and Spirit, to be your God?' And the soul is brought at length to yield a ready, free, complying answer; 'Aye, with all my heart.' This is that will save a man; this brings him as into an ark, to save him from the common deluge of wickedness and wrath that do overwhelm this world. Then he is safe, then he is in the ark; that is, when his conscience hath given a complying answer, with a sincere conscience, 'I do take God to be my God.' The sign (it may be) that was applied many years ago, avails nothing, without the thing signified; but if the thing signified do come to obtain, to take place, here is one that takes God to be his God; then the business is done; then the man is safe, when the sign before applied is now answered and filled up; there is that which is correspondent to it; the soul is now won, and brought to give its answer; the covenant stands between God and it, it is a sealed covenant; and so is such an one marked out for safety and preservation from the common ruin. And this is that which we have to deal with the consciences of men about, to bring them to a final answer. Sinner, wilt thou still live without God in the world? Wilt thou still wander from God? go astray from God? Dost thou still think it safe to live in estrangement from God, and neglect of him? never thinking of worshipping him, trusting on him, loving him, and delighting in him, from day to day? Or wilt thou yet at length be brought, upon the many applications that have been made to thy conscience, to answer, with a sincere conscience, 'Now I am willing, from my very soul, that God shall be mine; and I will be his in and through Christ.' It is herein that our transaction doth receive its happy issue. This is the issue we drive at to bring conscience to a final answer, if it be possible, 'I am won, I am overcome; I do answer, in my very conscience; I judge it best and safest, most equal, most dutiful, and most comfortable, to fall in with the Gospel offer, and take God in Christ for my God.' But,

2dly. Why must our business thus lie in a transaction of men's consciences? To that I shall need to say very little, because the thing speaks itself. That is,

1. That there being this principle in man, which signifies nothing else but a power to judge in such matters, relating to such practices as shall be laid before him. And,

2. The objects carrying in themselves (as you have heard) a self-recommending evidence to this principle, nothing remains, nothing is left, but that in the course of our ministry, in the way of our dealings with men's souls, that we do thus apply ourselves, do thus deal with this principle of conscience. Touching these objects, it is the office of conscience to judge of things, and the things themselves carry with them an evidence that comes under the notion, cognizance, and judgment of conscience; even by that very light wherewith they are clothed, and therefore the matter speaks itself; our business must lie there or no where; if we do not in these matters apply ourselves to the consciences of men, and treat with them, we had as good talk with stones and pillars.

Therefore I shall leave that, and speak somewhat to the third observation, the use of which too will best fall in afterwards together.

3rd Doctrine.—This transaction with the consciences of men must be in the sight of God,—there it must be made. I shall here briefly show, 1st, what this means; and 2ndly, why it must be so.

1st, What meaneth that such a resolution should be taken, and such a course held, we will transact, and do transact with the consciences of men in the sight of God? What can the meaning of that be? Why,

1. Negatively, the meaning of it is not, barely, that God shall see, or will see, how this transaction is managed. That is not all that is meant by it, for it is very manifest that the import of this speech holds forth to us somewhat electively done in this matter; but God's seeing us is not a thing subject to our's or any man's choice, he will see whether we will or no; and if that were all that were resolved in the case, it were to resolve God's part, and not our own part; and this were idle and foolish for us to do, he will do his own part, and this in particular; he will see, look on, and behold whatsoever we do, and whatsoever you do. "All things are naked and manifest to his eye, with whom we have to do," Heb. iv. 12. And, therefore, it were a piece of very impertinent officiousness for us, to take upon us to determine and resolve, that God should see what we do in this matter, should look upon you and us, and see how the transaction between us and your consciences is ordered, that he shall take notice of it; that cannot be the thing meant: as if any man should say, I will do such or such a thing in the light of the sun; nobody will understand the meaning of that to be, I will make the sun shine, or cause the sun to shine while I do such a thing; he can resolve nothing, but in reference to his own act, and in reference to his own part. And so it is here, it is only in reference to our own part, that we resolve such a transaction in the sight of God. Therefore, positively,

2. There is a part or act of our own implied in this, that we will do such and such a thing, and this in particular in

the sight of God. And what is that? That is, we will appeal to the sight of God, and to his judgment, about what we do in this matter. And this is a thing electively and voluntarily done, as a matter of choice, that we will appeal to his eye; it is true, it is no matter of choice that God will see, but it is matter of choice that we will appeal to that eye of his. And this is the great character of sincere ones, often mentioned in Scripture; that is, that as they know God beholds and sees them in every thing, so they do study and labour to approve themselves to his eye, and (as it were) invocate his observation. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. It was a dignostick of sincerity, that was enjoined as a test upon Abraham; "I am God all-sufficient, walk before me, and be perfect or upright," (Gen. xvii. 1.) Walk before me, walk so as apprehending my inspection, and so as to approve thyself to the observation of mine eye, through thy whole course; and with this, there is a conjunction mentioned of his uprightness; implying that to be a dignostick of this: "Walk before me, and be upright;" walk as in my sight, (as only the upright man will do,) and therein show thyself an upright man. So the Psalmist, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living," Ps. cxvi. 9. I will studiously approve myself, through the whole of my walking, unto the view and judgment of his observing eye. And so it is said of them who do truly, or that do the truth, that they bring their deeds to the light, "that they may be manifest that they are wrought in God," John iii. 21. They do willingly expose their deeds to be viewed in the light, from the secret consciousness that there is a Divine power and presence with them that doth help them on in their way and course; and this, they desire, should be made manifest, that they do not live at the common rate; that they do not walk as men (as the expression is, 1 Cor. iii.) That it may be seen that their course is managed in the power of a divine principle, that their works are wrought in God. Here is an elective appeal all along to the Divine eye; which hypocrites and unsound persons would decline and shun even to the uttermost; "they will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved," John iii. 20. And when it is said, "there is no darkness or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves," it implies, fain they would keep in the dark from the eyes of the looker upon the ways of men, who sees their goings. They are for the night, for a corner, for darkness, but they can find none; they vainly seek it, though this be the wish of their hearts, as the poet expresseth it, "*Da mihi noctem, da mihi nubem;*" Oh for a cloud, oh for a dark night! We do appeal to the consciences of men, in the sight of God; we appeal to his eye, voluntarily and freely desiring him to be judge when we deal and treat with men upon this account, whether we do not sincerely desire their best good, and highest glory, in this negociation of ours. This, therefore, is the plain meaning of doing what we do in this case "in the sight of God;" that is, as electively appealing to the eye of God, in the transaction and management of this affair.

And so there are now two parts manifestly distinguishable; that is, God's part looking on, and man's part in appealing to his observing eye, and expressing a desire of his complacency in reference to those things he is looking upon; but then, as to our own part, or man's part, wherein we are concerned, which lies under our present consideration, that you may also see is two-fold; that is, there is the preacher's part, and there is the hearer's part; it is the former of these that is directly here meant; and the latter implicitly and by consequence.

1. The former is meant directly, that is, they whose business it is, as ministers of the Gospel, to treat and deal with the souls of men; their part is directly there expressed, to appeal to the eye of God, concerning their own integrity and the uprightness of their aims, in all the applications they may make from him, and upon his account to souls. But then,

2. The hearer's part is implied; not as that in reference whereto we can undertake, but as that in reference whereto we do and must endeavour; that is, that they also may be brought to appeal to the eye of God, in this transaction that is between us and their consciences. This is that we must endeavour. As,

1. We must endeavour to make them sensible of the Divine presence, in which we are at such times as these. That is incumbent upon us on our part, that we engage you as much as in us is, to do your part; that is, to appeal jointly with us to the eye of God, about that for which we appeal to you and your consciences: our business must be to make you apprehensive and sensible, that we are in the presence of God; that there is a Divine eye inspecting us, looking upon us; we must put you in mind of this, that we speak and you hear in the presence of God, and under the observation of his eye, his piercing eye is upon us, he sees with what mind and design the speaker preacheth; he observes with what temper and disposition of mind every hearer hereth. This we are to our utmost to make you apprehensive of. And,

2. Supposing deviations and wanderings, (to which we are always too prone,) we must summon you into the Divine presence, so as to let the matter we deal with you about, be transacted as in that presence; we must deal with you as upon such a supposition as this, It is an easy thing for you to put off a man that speaks to you;—you think you may boldly and safely slight the words of a poor mortal man; but we must have you into the presence of God, and all this affair must be transacted as under the eye. If you do disregard what a poor mortal man saith to you, come, let you and I go before the Lord now, here he is upon the throne; pray let him have the hearing of the controversy between you and us; give him the hearing of it, let him see the state of the case, submit the matter between us to his judgment, whether you ought not to receive such and such truths, whether you ought not to comply and yield to the authority of such and such precepts, and whether you ought not to dread and shun to the uttermost such and such sins. Pray let the great God have the hearing of the business; we summon you into his presence, and would not have you regard us in what we say, but him. And if we should go to particular instances; it may be, there are such and such sins that divers of you have been from time to time admonished of, and it hath been all in vain; you would never give us the hearing; we have spoke (as it were) to the wind. Suppose a licentious young man have given up himself to walk in the way of his own heart; and we have reasoned the matter with such, and debated it with them, whether it were not safer for them to be under the Divine government, to walk according to Divine prescriptions, than follow the hurry and impetus of sensual inclinations; telling them this will be your death, this will be your ruin, this you will rue for another day; but they will not hear us. Then we only say, in this case, "Come, and let you and I go before the Lord;" and let the matter be reasoned out in his sight, or in his hearing, and let him judge between you and us, whether you ought not to hearken, whether it will be fit for you, a creature, to oppose the will of your Creator; one that was raised out of the dust but the other day, to oppose your appetite and inclination to his authority, to his wisdom, to his good, and righteous, and holy will? Do but try, and see what courage and confidence you can have thus to give the cause to your own will, fancy, and humour, against his will, wisdom, and authority; now you are brought before his throne, and now the matter comes to be transacted immediately as under his eye, between you and a poor messenger of his, that he employs in his work; and so, though we can only directly do our own part in this business, as appealing to conscience under God's eye; we must likewise put you upon your part, that is, must summon you, and draw you in with us, into such an appeal to God, when we are dealing with your consciences in their souls' concerns.

Now, by this time, I hope you see what this transaction with the consciences of men, as in the sight of God, doth mean. And if,

2ndly, You would know why it must be thus, why this transaction should be with the consciences of men in the sight of God, manifold reasons presently offer themselves. As,

1. It is his work that we are employed in, his business that we go about, when we speak to men to turn and live, when we would have them repent and believe the Gospel;

when we would have you come back to God, and pay your homage unto him, it is his work that we are doing all this time. And why should we not, as much as it is possible, aim and endeavour, that we may see how his work is done? That is, that we bring you under his eye as much as in us is.

2. We go about this work of his continually in his name. It is his work, and done in his name; by his authority we continue in it, being sent of him. Why should not what is done in his name, be done under his eye, even of our own design and choice, as much as is possible, on the one hand and the other? For whatsoever we are to do, we are to do in the Lord's name; we that speak, are to speak in the Lord's name; you that hear, are to hear in the Lord's name, or hear what is spoken in his name. And why should it not be a matter of choice with us, that all be transacted as under his eye and in his sight? And,

3. He hath equal power over us, and over you; his power obtains alike over all; and where we are sure his power is alike over all, why should we not all endeavour alike to walk under his eye, and labour to approve ourselves to his eye, under which all are? And,

4. He perfectly knows all matters of fact that do belong to this transaction; and, therefore, since we are sure he doth, it is better that we consider it, and accordingly, study to approve ourselves to his inspection; he doth know all the matter of fact; he knows my thoughts, and all your thoughts, throughout this whole transaction, on such a day, and at such a time as this. And,

5. He is the only competent judge of the matter of right; whether you or I do right or wrong, in reference to what is spoken and heard. And lastly,

6. To be sure, he will be the final judge; it is good for us to consent and agree to it, that he shall be the present judge, and that then this transaction be carried on designedly under his eye; he will be the judge at last, when the secret of all hearts shall be laid open, and there is no declining his judgment; certainly, therefore, it is the wisest and best course, as much as possible, by consent and willingly to bring things under his eye, and notice now; and endeavour to approve all this transaction to the inspection, the present inspection of that eye, the final judgment whereof we cannot avert.

And so way is made for somewhat of use, in reference to this two-fold observation, that we have thus far insisted on: many things might be said, but for present take this.

We may see by all this what the case is like, of them that live long disobedient to the voice of the Gospel, under which they live. See a little and judge of the state of their case and affairs. They that live statedly under the Gospel, must be supposed to have many applications made to their consciences, for that is the very business of the Gospel, immediately to apply itself to the very consciences of men; for you that have lived long under the Gospel, (whether successfully or unsuccessfully,) there have been many applications made to your consciences, by those that have been employed in this work about matters of the highest importance and concern; you had best consider with what success and with what effect; but if it hath been with little, that is, if hitherto you have disobeyed the voice of that Gospel, under which you have so long lived, it cannot but have been with very great regret, many turns and reclamations of your consciences: if conscience were not a capable principle of judgment, when it is applied unto, when appeals are made to it,—it would be the vainest thing in all the world to talk of commending ourselves to the consciences of men, in the sight of God, as the apostle here speaks. Why to their consciences? It were as good do it to any thing else as conscience,—if conscience be not a principle susceptible of conviction, when it is applied unto. Therefore now let it be considered, that conscience is a judge wherever it hath place and is applied unto; it doth (as it were) keep its power; and, indeed, it is capable of sustaining several parts: where there is a judicature, there is a registry too; and it is as well capable of recording things as of judging them. It may be, many have made it their business to slur and blot the records that are kept in the court of conscience. But that is a vain thing, this shall all come into view again. Every time that thou hast come, with a vain heart, into the presence of God; every time thou hast offered here the sacrifice of a fool; every time thou hast come like such an one, with thine eyes in the ends of the earth, when they should have been intent upon the Divine Majesty, to pay thy homage to him; every time thou hast opposed resolution against conviction of conscience, thou wert convinced in thy conscience, certainly there must be a change, and a reformation; things must not be with me as they have been; it is not a right way I have been, but thou hast resolved, I will not reform,—I will live as I have lived, do as I have done: every time that Christ hath been offered to thee, and thou hast refused him, and he hath had cause to complain, as in the prophet, "My people would not hearken to my voice; Israel would have none of me," (Psalm lxxxi. 11.) they that call themselves mine, profess themselves Christians, call themselves by my name, would have none of me: every time thou hast been urged, If thou wilt have life, thou must have the Son; "he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life," John v. 12. Come, (saith God,) wilt thou have my Son? Thou hast not said, Yea; thy heart hath not consented; and that is all one as if thou hast said, No; when the thing hath not been done so often, hast thou been recorded a refuser of the Son of God? thy conscience hath been convinced over and over, I ought to receive the Son of God; this command being brought to me from heaven, to believe in his name; that is, to resign myself to him, and submit myself to him; but I never did, I never have; this is a most fearful case, that there ever should be such records in a man's conscience against him; to which there have been continual additions, from Lord's day to Lord's day, through a long tract of time, and yet my course hath been the same. Notwithstanding all the reclamations of conscience, there hath been no reformation in my heart, none in my life; I am just the same as I was seven or ten years ago; so many convictions of conscience yet to be answered, for they never have been yet. Oh, think of the state of their affairs that have lived long under the Gospel, disobedient to it. Conscience hath been still applied to, and appealed to in the sight of God, under his eye and notice; and yet there hath been no consent, no compliance given; "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth," Rom. xiv. 22. That carries a dreadful intimation, Cursed is he that condemneth himself in that thing which he alloweth; *that he alloweth*. It was a good thing to have accepted the Son of God, to have turned to God, and come to an agreement with him in and by his Son, and to have broken off every evil way, and to have betaken myself to a strict and regular course of walking with God, a very good thing! what a cursed thing, a dismal thing, is it then to condemn oneself in the thing which he alloweth? I allow all this to be good, and so am self-condemned for not doing it. "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts," 1 John iii. 29. When a man is condemned in his own heart; when he hath a judgment in his conscience about any matter, indefinitely considered, and his practice runs counter, so as to bring himself unawares under the judgment of it. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemneth thyself," Rom. ii. 1. Which is spoken in reference to what was said in the foregoing words, "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but take pleasure in those that do them," Rom. i. last verse. They know that judgment; it stands as a judgment, and a righteous one, in their view; they themselves have judged this judgment to be right. Thou art then inexcusable, O man, that judgest in what thou judgest; thou hast judged such and such a way to be evil, and such and such a determination in reference thereunto to be righteous, and yet by doing that thing, thou dost run thyself under such a judgment and doom. Oh! what an inexcusable creature art thou!

SERMON V.*

2 Cor. iv. 2,

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience.

Our business must be at this time (as you foreknow) the application of two of those observations together which have been gathered from these words; (two doctrines applied together;) to wit, the second, That the great business of the ministry lies in an immediate transaction with men's consciences; and the third, That this transaction with the consciences of men is to be managed in the sight of God. These two have been opened, and are now to be applied together; and there are many things which it is very obvious to infer from the one or the other of them. As,

1. That therefore, in carrying on the ministerial work, such things are mostly to be insisted on, as are most accommodate to conscience, and are apt to take hold of it; and about which we may, with the greatest confidence and clearness, appeal to the consciences of men: when once it is understood what principle in men we are to apply ourselves to in the ministerial work, it is then very obvious to collect what sort of things we are principally to insist upon in the managing of it. And you see what that principle is; it is not that we are wont to call wit, or fancy, or honour, or even the speculative understanding, or a disposition to religious disputes, about little, and doubtful, and less necessary matters; much less is it carnal appetite and inclination, that is to be concerned, so as to be pleased, or (at least) not to be displeased, not to be crossed, not to be vexed, not contended against; and, therefore, the things we have to say to men, in carrying on of our ministerial work, they must be quite of another nature from what would accommodate such principles as these in them. And you may easily apprehend how instructive this inference may be to all of you; and I hope you do apprehend it, though in the direct aspect of it it doth only respect Gospel ministers. And you might very well think it strange, and very little worth the while, that so many hundreds of persons should come together, only to hear ministers preach to one another; but yet, when you do understand what is fit for us to preach, you will also understand what is fit for you to hear, and what is necessary for you to receive, and to expect, and covet to hear most of all, and before other things; and so you cannot but see of how universal concernment what I now infer must be to us all; that is, that you are not to expect from us, (if we will faithfully pursue that which is our proper work, of applying ourselves directly and closely to the consciences of men) you are not to expect (I say) fine and quaint sentences, elegant and well-formed orations; you are not to expect curious airy notions and speculations; and much less are you to expect that we should only prophesy to you smooth and pleasant things, that we may be sure will not offend, that will not bear hard upon any man's inclinations, how ill or irregular soever they may be; you cannot think any thing of this to be our business, when we have conscience to deal with in this matter, and are to apply ourselves immediately and directly thither, and in the sight of God, and under his eye: nor are you to expect that we should entertain you much with perplexed disputes about little and disputable matters; and which, commonly, by how much the more disputable they are, are so much the less necessary, God having so mercifully provided, that those things that should be most necessary, should be always plain, and so should need the least dispute. I know some have wondered, that when divers have very much concerned themselves in this juncture of time, both from the pulpit, and by the press, to propagate disputes about lesser differences, in matters of religion, there should be so great a silence about these things among us; and we must really and freely declare to you, we have no leisure to mind those lesser things, we are taken up about greater, and we think we are bound to be taken up about unspeakably greater things. I do consider again and again, that saying of the apostle, "Study to be quiet, and do your own business," 1 Thess. iv. 11. And for my part, I think this to be our business,—to deal with the consciences of men in the plainest and most important things, such as are most apt to fasten upon and take hold of conscience; for as to those lesser things, there is much that is very disputable about them; some indeed do think those things to be indifferent, which others think to be unlawful in the worship of God; yet this is plain then, by consent on both sides, that they may be safely enough let alone, as to what they carry in themselves; and, therefore, we content ourselves to let them alone. This is plain, they may be well let alone: and when the apostle doth here speak of this thing, "by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," you see what, and about what things it was, by what follows: —"If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;" why then, by the manifestation of such truth as is necessary to prevent men being lost; that is, as is necessary in itself to their salvation, that they may not be lost; it was by such things, by which they sought to commend themselves to the conscience of every man in the sight of God. I know, indeed, there is a necessity commonly alleged by some for these lesser things; that is, that though they are not necessary in themselves, they may become necessary as being enjoined. It is very true, indeed, if that were agreed on both sides, that they were indifferent,—we could readily say so with them; but they themselves very well know that that is not the state of the case between them and us; while on the one side such things are indifferent, on the other side, it is said, in the worship of God it is unlawful. And though it be true, indeed, that we are bound to obey every injunction of man, for the Lord's sake; yet we are bound to obey none of them against him; therefore, that is plain, about things in dispute, the safest way is to be unconcerned, in matters of which, there is some doubt. And every good man must concur with us in this principle, though the particular application of it to this or that case, the peculiarity and difference of their own judgment, obligeth them to disagree; but we shall certainly agree with all good and serious men, that differ from us about these lesser matters, in insisting principally and chiefly upon such matters as are necessary to save souls from being lost; for it is plain, that good and serious men do so too, and let those matters alone for the most part, and have as little mind to concern themselves about them, as we have; and no doubt, but that when we shall more generally agree to pursue such things most, as tend to promote and propagate the power of godliness, and keep it alive, and prevent (as much as in us is) all from acquiescing and taking up their rest, in any form whatsoever, without it; when we shall all agree to make it our common business, to press the things that do belong to living, real, substantial godliness; and mutually to seek one another's common welfare, as we would do our own; when we agree to press and insist on these two great capital things, upon which hang all the law and the prophets; that is, loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our might, and with all our mind, and loving our neighbour as ourselves; I doubt not but as to all these lesser differences, or differences about lesser matters, either we shall come to an agreement about them too, in time; or our disagreement will be, upon the matter, equal to an agreement;—that is, we shall disagree without displeasure, without being angry at one another for our disagreement; or, because that such and such will not make our consciences the measure and standard of their's,—a poor matter of quarrel, and certainly a most unrighteous one, that I should be offended at any man, because he will not make my conscience the measure of his; and it is upon the matter, all one in this our present state, whether there be a full and throughout agreement in every little thing, in judgment or practice; or, whether we can, very contentedly, bear with one another's differences. If we can do so, if we can disagree with one another modestly, and without expecting that another should resign and surrender the judgment of his conscience to the government of mine: if we can disagree with an humble sense of our common, yet remaining, ignorance,

* Preached February 18th, 1690.

and how little do all of us know, and how much yet needs to be added to our knowledge, even about the most important things; truly disagreement upon such terms, so placid, so charitable, so calm, so unapt to offend, and which doth so little offend, will be a good step,—the next step to a perfect throughout agreement. It may be, that will never be in this world, or while our earthly state continues. But if our disagreement be thus managed, it will be less material; whether it be or no unto our peace, it can never be necessary unto them that are of a peaceable temper and disposition of themselves aforehand; but they who are not so, that have an unpeaceable temper and disposition in them, will always find one matter of quarrel and another; and if such things were once composed and taken up, would be sure to find out others; but this we may always reckon upon, that such as will be faithful in the ministerial work, we must expect to hear from them such things (as you have heard) that may carry in them a recommendableness to the consciences of men: in which, when conscience is urged with matter of duty upon them, it will apprehend a *bonum*: my conscience tells me I shall be the better for it if I take this course: if I walk in such a way as the great things which concern the substance of religion direct unto, whereas those lesser matters, when you come to seek in them for a *bonum*, search into them for what they have of real good in them; you think to grasp at them for somewhat, and you grasp at nothing; you go to embrace them, and you embrace only a shadow, and hug an empty cloud and no more. They are things, which conscience cannot feel to have any real and substantial goodness in them;—that then is the first thing hence inferred. Are we, in our ministerial work, to apply and commend ourselves to the consciences of men, and even in the sight of God? We then must deal with them about such things, that are most apt and accommodate to this purpose, to take hold of men's consciences.

2. If the work of the ministry do lie so much about men's consciences, we must reckon that the work of the Holy Ghost (who is to animate this ministry, and make it prosperous) must lie first and most immediately about the consciences of men too; not that it takes up there, but it is through conscience that it must touch men's hearts. "We commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; but if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. But God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." If you view the series of the discourse, you will find that that speaks (as well as the matter speaks) itself, that God's way is to shine into hearts through convinced consciences: and this ministration, in all the forgoing chapter that the apostle refers to, is called the manifestation of the spirit, and by it we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord; to wit, as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Therefore," (saith the apostle, in the following words,) "having received this ministry, we faint not;" a ministry, managed by the Holy Ghost. Now, if the immediate first subject of this ministry hath to do with the consciences of men, then the consciences of men must be that which the Holy Ghost must have to do with too; for the supreme Agent, and the subordinate, are both to operate upon the same subject,—as you now that are writing, your hand and pen write upon the same paper, and not your hand upon one, and your pen upon another. It is conscience that is the seat of conviction, and thither the Holy Ghost, by the Gospel ministry, doth apply itself for this purpose; "When he is come, he shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," John xvi. 8. The Comforter, (so we read it,) when he is come, shall do so and so; but sure we do much misread it when we read it so. *Paracletos* is the word, the *paraclete*; the proper signification is the advocate or pleader, a pleader as at law. The disciples were here overwhelmed with sorrow, to think what would become of them when their Lord was gone, of which he had been immediately foretelling them; "Because I have told you that I must be gone from you, sorrow hath filled your heart;" that is, they did recount with themselves, since he had told them, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that they should be witnesses for him, because they had been with him from the beginning; then, think they, the whole weight and stress of the Christian cause in this world lies upon our shoulders, and we shall surely sink under it; Who are we that we should think to set up a new religion in the world,—a religion, against which all sorts, both Jews and Gentiles, have so rooted and natural a prejudice? What, are we for this? Why saith our Lord Christ, never trouble yourselves, when I go, the advocate shall come,—that pleader, that mighty pleader; and he shall make strange work in the world when once he comes; he shall take up my cause; whereas I have been traduced and charged as a seducer, and a deceiver, he shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me, and of my righteousness and the equity of my righteous cause; and, thereupon, of the very completing and perfection of that righteousness, which is to be had by me, which depends thereupon; and of judgment, when I shall be known to be enthroned, and to have all government, and principality, and power, put under me, or into my hands,—and so the Christian cause shall live, and spread, and triumph, when I am gone, and so much the more for my being so, for if I be not gone, that great pleader will not come, and when he comes, this shall be his great business, conviction,—he shall fasten such conviction upon the consciences of men, they shall not be able to withstand and baffle. Oh, when that mighty Spirit comes among us, then will no man be able to persist in a carnal course and habit of heart and life; but this Spirit will make them weary of it, they will never be able to endure the weight and pressure of his convictions, when through the Gospel ministry he comes to fasten and take hold of consciences, and to implead them upon such an account. What? Is this christianity? Is this like a living union with the Son of God, the Lord from heaven? To live continually like worms of this earth, grovelling in the dust, always minding and savouring no higher and no greater thing? But, again,

3. Is the ministerial work to be managed in the very sight of God, with the consciences of men? Then (this having a very ill look upon the kingdom and interest of the wicked one) it is obvious further to infer, that the devil's work must lie very much too about the consciences of men; that is, to blind conscience, to cheat conscience, to deceive conscience, to disguise and misrepresent things to the consciences of men; so you see it allows, if our Gospel be hid,—if it doth not reach home with convictive and energetical light to the very consciences of men, it is because "the god of this world hath blinded their minds:" it doth reach home with such light, except to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded their minds. If men cannot see what is their way and duty in very plain and evident things; as that a man, who was a sinner even by nature, and under wrath, can never be acceptable to God, but for the sake of a Redeemer; and never for his sake, if he have not living union with him, if he be not in him, and so in him as to be a new creature,—old things being done away, and all things being become new. If men cannot see truth in so plain matters as these, that speak themselves to every man's conscience, it is, because the God of this world hath blinded their eyes. If the work of the Gospel, and of the Spirit that breathes in it, be with the consciences of men, the devil's work must lie there too; if it be possible to blind conscience and disguise things to conscience; that is, to corrupt man's judgments of things, and to make them to apprehend things otherwise than they are. And so it was that he did apply himself to our first parents, only by putting false glosses upon those plain preceptive and monitory words that should have obliged and awed conscience. Oh, never think God meaneth such severity to you, ye shall not die if you eat of this fruit; never think he intended you should die; no, this is that will make you wise and knowing, far beyond what you are, you will be as gods, knowing good and evil. His business was to put a false gloss and colour upon things, to deceive their judgments and consciences, and to lead them into transgression, and this his design is still to keep men in that state of apostacy into which he had

drawn them from returning to God, only by imposing upon and cheating their consciences. Notwithstanding this loose and careless course you hold, never trouble yourselves, all will be well enough, a formal religion will serve the turn, and be less painful and laborious to you than that real one, and that living one that is from time to time so much pressed upon you. It will serve your turn to go to church, or go to a meeting, and hear a sermon on the Lord's day, and live as you list all the week long; you never need concern yourselves further. All the devil's care is to keep conscience from doing its duty and its proper office, that if it be applied and appealed to by us, in the ministry of the Gospel, you may not attend it; it may not be at leisure to hear what we say, that it may be kept asleep, or diverted some way or other, or that it may otherwise attend things than according to the truth.

4. We may further infer hence, that since the business of the ministry is to transact with conscience, from time to time, in the very sight of God; they that live under such a ministry, if conscience ever come to be awakened into exercise, they must live a very weary life, if they live in a course of sin and estrangement from God. They that will, (I say,) under such a ministry, sin on still, and wander from God, still they will lead a very weary life; it must needs be a very uneasy course that such must hold in the world; for if conscience be awakened and do attend, they will be continually hearing things that tend to disturb and disquiet them, and make them apprehend danger, and see themselves like to be ruined, and undone, and lost, in the course that they hold: and therefore, certainly, the case is very deplorable of such persons, who, under such a ministry, do still live in sin, whether they live in a course of very gross wickedness, or whether they keep in a course of vain formal religion, and no more. They must be very uneasy if conscience be awake; and if conscience be not awake, it is worse, and their case more deplorable. And really it is dismal to think of it, that such persons should hear so much, from day to day, that hath a tendency in it to make them to fear and suspect their present way, and present state, with so little effect; for on they go only because (though that be uneasy to them) they apprehend to get that sin subdued and mortified, that hath governed in them and had the throne, will be more uneasy; and since it comes to pass, that, things being brought to this pass, either sin must be mortified, or conscience must be mortified, they betake themselves to the latter. If they cannot be patient of it, that sin must die, and undergo mortification, then, of consequence, they must betake themselves to this, that conscience must undergo this dying and mortification; and so, really, they have a very uneasy task of it, that they must, for their own peace sake, be continually fighting against conscience, from one Lord's day to another, and endeavouring that it may let them alone in their old security, in their old carnality, in their old neglect of God. Here is their business with their consciences. Oh, conscience, let me live in neglect of Christ, and be quiet! Let me live fearless of God in this life, and be quiet! Let me live a prayerless life, and be quiet! But conscience cannot very easily submit to let such be quiet, because there are such courses taken, from time to time, while they live under such a ministry, whereby we must be applying ourselves to their consciences, in the sight of God. This awakens conscience afresh, and then it must be laid asleep again; so toilsome and uneasy a way of it have some to perdition; they are fain to fight their way to hell, even through so many and so great difficulties. And,

5. We may further infer, that if the Gospel ministry is principally to be taken up in dealing with the consciences of men in the sight of God, it can be no shame to any man to be in this way conquered and subdued, and brought under to the foot of God in Christ: it can be no shame to any body to be thus conquered; for to be conquered by conscience is, upon the matter, to be conquered by himself. You have no reason to be ashamed to be conquered by yourself; you yield to yourself in the case; you yield to your own light, that which God hath made your own; you yield to your convinced judgment; you have no cause to be ashamed of that. It is a shame for a man to be cheated, to be imposed upon, to be made to appear a fool, as every sinner is that goes on in the way of his own heart, "disobedient, and deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," Titus iii. 3. But it is no shame for a man to be undeceived; it is no shame for a man to be brought to exercise a right judgment, once certified and set aright in him. This is a glory, to be thus conquered: you are indeed conquered; you alter you course; you cease to be what you were; but it is brought to that pass, you do but yield to yourself, yield to your own light, yield to your own judgment, and to the power of that conviction you see is no longer to be withstood. And upon the same account,

6. They that do conquer conscience and Gospel light in such a sense, have no reason to boast of their victory; they have very little reason to brag; they that can say and tell their companions, I have heard such and such a sermon, and it put me into a deadly qualm; I knew not what to do; my heart almost failed me, and began to misgive me; and I began to think within myself, I must alter my course, I must become a Christian in good earnest; I had such thoughts as these, and such inclinations, but I have overcome them; I have conquered conscience; I have got the victory over them. Alas! these men have little reason to boast of this, of having conquered their reason, judgment, conscience, and light, and made these to give place to lust and sensual inclinations; when a man hath been summoned and called into the presence of God, and hath had so mighty a load laid upon his spirit, as to have such a thing contested with him in the sight of God, and under the Divine eye, yet he hath conquered it, got the victory; this, certainly, he hath no cause to boast or brag of. A dismal victory! a few such victories as these will undo him quite. If God should let you carry the cause, carry the victory, from day to day, this victory will end in a total and endless ruin. Again,

7. We may further infer, that, since this ministerial work is to be managed with the very consciences of men in the sight of God, it is one of the most weighty, solemn things that a man can possibly go about, to hear a sermon where he is likely to be dealt with at this rate; that is, generally to go to hear a Gospel sermon, according to the true import of the Gospel, and the true design of the Gospel ministry, it is one of the awfullest, solemnest things that a man can go about in the world: for he ought to reckon in this case, I am now going to such a place, and for what? Why, it is to hear a sermon, in which I expect my conscience is to be appealed to all along; and it is to be appealed unto in the sight of God; and the minister will summon me into the presence of God: and if I do not yield,—but my heart hesitates, and stands off,—I expect to hear this from him; Come, let you and I debate this matter in the sight of God, before the throne of God, and see if you know how to baffle conscience, and reject its convictions, in the sight of God, and while God looks on and audits the business between you and me, and between you and your own conscience. It is a great thing to go to hear a sermon upon such terms; many little think what they do, when they run to a sermon as they would to a play, or to such a meeting as they would to a bear-baiting; but if they would but consider what the Gospel ministry is, and wherein it lies, in a transaction with men's consciences, and that transaction to be managed in the sight of God, they would find it an awful thing to go to hear a sermon upon these terms.

2nd Use. And, therefore, now for a conclusion to be added to these inferences, as somewhat of further use, pray let this put you, in the next place, upon reflection, upon considering; you have lived long under the Gospel, under the ministry of it; the very business whereof was to transact with your consciences in the sight of God. Pray do but inquire,

1. Have you been wont to engage your consciences in this transaction? And,

2. Have you been wont to do it as in the sight of God, yea or nay? for hitherto you have been called, to this you have been called; your consciences have been applied and appealed to; have you heard their voice answering thus; Why, I am called to a transaction, to my part in a transaction I agree readily, my conscience shall be appealed to? And, further, have you agreed the transaction shall be in the sight of God, answering thus; "I am willing to be judged by the impartial supreme Judge, and if I cannot

approve myself in his sight, I will condemn and abase myself in his sight?" I pray, hath it been wont to be so with you in that long tract of time wherein you have sat under the Gospel? Have you engaged conscience in such a transaction as this? And have you done it in the sight of God, from time to time? If you have not, hence is your not profiting; hence is your sitting under the Gospel, from year to year, to no purpose. Conscience hath been spoken to, and would never answer; you have been careful to keep it asleep, to keep it undisturbed; you have declined the Divine presence; you would not come and present yourselves before the judicature of God; you have laboured to stifle all such thoughts as much as in you was; your case is, then, as our Saviour represents it with the Jews; "Whereto shall I liken this generation; they are like children sitting in the market-place, and calling their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented," Matt. xi. 16. Even so it is with this generation. And is it not so with our generation, too? We speak to the consciences of men, and they do not echo back; they give no correspondent answer; when we would transact with them, they are dead, or asleep. And hence, no good is done; conscience is not engaged; it will not advert to the business in hand; it minds it not: and thereupon the kingdom of God doth not suffer violence, (Matt. xi. 12.) as in that same context; "For until now (saith our Saviour) the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." But now there is a dead calm, a dead flat, and we pipe to men, and they do not dance; we mourn to them, and they do not lament; there is no echo, no correspondent voice. This is now (saith he) the case of this generation. But I might here be a little more particular in my inquiry. And,

1. You know you have been often urged and pressed, as to a thing wherein the very substance of all religion doth inchoatively consist and lie, all serious and living religion; that is, a solemn surrender of yourselves to God in Christ. "Yield yourselves to God," Rom. vi. 13. "Present yourselves to him a living sacrifice," Rom. xii. 1. As it is said of those Christians, "They gave themselves to the Lord," 2 Cor. viii. 5. Hath not this been a thing plain to your consciences, that you ought to have done so? And have none of you lived in neglect of it to this day? You could never find a leisure time wherein solemnly to apply yourselves to God in Christ, and say, Lord, I now come to surrender to thee thine own; I have brought thee back a stray, a wandering creature, myself, my own self: accept a poor wandering soul, that now desires to give up itself to thee, and take thee, in Christ, for mine. A plain thing as any thing can be to any conscience of man; conscience hath been frequently applied to in this case, as in the sight of God, and yet, from year to year, no such thing as this hath ever been done. Again,

2. To consider how often you have been spoken to about solemn preparation for such a day's work as this; to come with prepared hearts, in some measure, at least to design to come prepared to the holy solemnities of such a day. God knows how often you have been applied to and conscience hath been spoken to in this matter; but with what effect, you in great part know, that still are wont to rush upon the sacred solemnities of such a day without considering—It is for my life, for my soul; it is in order to eternity, that I am approaching into the presence of God; and that it is that God that made me I have to do with; him I am going to serve, him I am going to seek.

3. How often hath conscience been appealed to about prayer! a course of prayer! of secret closet prayer, and family prayer! God knows with what effect. A dismal thing, if any of you have suffered a conviction of conscience about this years ago, and yet still live in the neglect of this, against conscience, to this very day. And,

4. About the great business of watchfulness, concerning which we have heard so much of late. Conscience hath been there applied to, as in the sight of God. Pray consider, are any of us become more watchful for it over our spirits, and over our way and course? It will be of great concernment to us, to urge ourselves, faithfully, and impartially, with such questions and inquiries as these.

And then, to close all, pray hereupon let us be persuaded and prevailed upon more to commune with conscience, and to commune with it in the sight of God, seeing we are in the sight of God put upon it. And to comply with conscience, yield to it, comport with it, and if (as was said) we cannot find our case to admit of it, that our consciences should justify us before God, let our consciences condemn us before God, let them judge us before God. If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord: we shall then have the matter thus taken up between him and us; otherwise, we still remain liable to his severe and uncontrollable judgment. And to urge this, pray do but weigh these few things.

1. That conscience, often baffled, will grow stupid. It is the way to stupify conscience to baffle it often; if you get in a habit of that, of running counter to light, and of imposing upon conscience, and bearing it down, it will become so tamely passive, that it will lay no restraint upon you,—you may do what you will; conscience will say no more, but let you take your course.

2. If you do so, the Spirit of God will retire too, and withdraw, and not assist conscience, which (as we are told) it doth in a way of reflex operation; but it doth as much (no doubt) in a way of direct operation, too: it works with conscience; and then conscience ceaseth, when there is a cessation of all such exercise with conscience; the Spirit can no more converse with us, than with that which is dead; when that thing is dead, quite dead, mortified into a total utter death, wherewith the Spirit of God should converse with us, then it retires, and is gone, in displeasure, as being grieved, vexed, and quenched. Oh, what a dreadful thing is that! It is a terrible thing when the Spirit is retired and gone, merely upon that resistance that he hath met with in our consciences. His business was to co-operate with them, to work with them, and by them. And we have made it our business to stupify conscience, to stifle and suppress it: and if the Spirit be gone thereupon in displeasure, this is a fearful thing. And consider,

3. That if, through the mercy of God, conscience should ever yet awake, and the Spirit return, by how much the longer it hath been stifled, so much the more terrible it will roar upon you, when it doth return. And if you be saved at length, you will be "saved as by fire," as I may allude to those words of the apostle. But,

4. If it never awake in this world, by how much the more industriously it hath been kept asleep in you, and by how much the less it hath done the part of an instructor and director, so much the more it will do the work of a tormentor hereafter, an everlasting tormentor. And this is a most dismal thing, for an intelligent immortal spirit to come down into perdition, into the place of torment, with open eyes, and to be asked there, "How camest thou hither?" and to be forced to answer, "It was by running all my time against my light; it was by contending against my conscience, and the grace of the Spirit of God, to the very last; so I made my way to perdition." Then that conscience that could never be heard before, will be heard then, and will be felt; the worm that dies not, gnawing eternally, even eternally upon the soul, amidst that fire, and those flames that shall never be quenched. But, in the last place,

5. Consider, too, the sweet peace and tranquillity that must ensue upon complying with conscience all along; following its light, obeying its convictions, keeping up a correspondence betwixt your judgments and consciences, and the temper of your spirits, and the course of your walking. This is a heaven upon earth. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. Upon these terms we may look in upon our souls, and behold all quiet: I have seen my way, and walked in it, as the grace of God hath kept me. "This is my rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have had my conversation in the world;" which is heaven on this side heaven. How pleasant sabbaths would you keep on these terms, when, looking back upon the last week, you have the testimony of your conscience; I have laboured to my uttermost to exercise a good conscience towards God and towards men, according to the

light that I have received from his word, and by that Gospel ministry under which I am! With how much peace shall a man upon one Lord's day look back upon his course through the foregoing week, since the former Lord's day! This would make sabbaths pleasant days to you, upon the review of that sweet commerce you have had with him in former times, and in expectation of being thus led on, from sabbath to sabbath, to the everlasting sabbath, at length, that remains for the people of God.

SERMON VI.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

WE have considered the words according to what, in themselves, they do import, and it remains now only to consider them (as we also proposed to do) in the reference to which they bear to the foregoing verse. "Therefore, as we have received this ministry, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, commending ourselves." And so it appears very plain that this course which the servants of God have held, in managing their ministerial work, to apply themselves directly therein to the consciences of men, hath been one of their great preservations against fainting in their work; so that they have pursued it with so much the more vigour and resolution upon this account, that herein they have made it their business to recommend themselves in the very sight of God to the consciences of men. And so we have this observation, as hath been already told you.

4th Doctrine. That the faithful ministers of the Gospel, from their applying in their work to the very consciences of men, have very great encouragement to go on in it without fainting. And hence it will be requisite only,

1. To show, briefly, what this fainting means. And then,

2. To show you how great an encouragement against it this is; to wit, their applying themselves all along directly to the very consciences of men, even in the sight of God.

1. What this not fainting meaneth. Fainting (as was told you) is two-fold, as is obvious to all, either bodily, or mental; and it is manifest, this is mental failing that is here disclaimed and disavowed, such as we find mentioned in Hebrews xii. 3. "Lest ye be weary and faint in your minds." Our minds do not faint in our work, while we are enabled to recommend ourselves in it to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and that fainting of the mind is again two-fold, it signifies either sloth or laziness, or else despondency and dejection of spirit: the word rendered fainting hath this double import in the other places of Scripture, where we find the same word used: "Our Lord spake a parable to such a purpose, to teach us to pray always, and not to faint." Luke xviii. at the beginning. That we neither grow slothful in it, nor despond upon it, so, be not weary of well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not, Gal. vi. 9. If you do not grow worse, if you do not suffer yourselves to be seized with a spirit of sloth, and if you do not yield to a desponding spirit. Now to be encouraged in our spirits doth include the opposite of these; for by how much the more there is of holy fortitude in any man's soul, so much the more there will be of lively and active vigour accompanying and going along with it.

And it is the design of the apostle in this negative expression to conjoin both these, fortitude and diligence, in opposition to despondency and sloth; and that there doth arise a very great spring of such enlivening vigour and fortitude, from this very reflection, that the faithful ministers of Christ may have upon the course of their procedure in their work, *viz.* That they have constantly all along in it, made it their business to recommend themselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God. That is the thing. I am now,

2. To make out unto you (having shown you what this not fainting meaneth;) and this encouragement (which, from our applying ourselves to the consciences of men we do receive) will appear to be different, or to arise to us in different ways, according to the different consideration we may have of the thing itself, this application to conscience in the sight of God; that may be considered two ways, either in the effect or in the design.

In the effect; the immediate effect I mean, and that is, the conviction of conscience. The immediate effect of such application to conscience, is the conviction of conscience; and the design thereof, that imports our steady aimings at this thing, to fasten conviction on men's consciences, as much as is possible to us: the former of these, therefore, speaks the convictiveness of this application to conscience, and the latter speaks the sincerity of it. The former is grounded on, and referred to, the former words in the text, "commending ourselves to every man's conscience;" and the latter refers to the latter words, "in the sight of God;" for as the convictiveness of this application terminates upon conscience itself; so sincerity herein terminates upon God, or upon the eye of God, who is the only judge of sincerity; hereupon these are the two things that are so very encouraging in this case,—the convictiveness of this application to conscience, and the sincerity of it.

1. The convictiveness of it; that is a very encouraging, enlivening, fortifying thing to the heart of a serious minister, and one who is faithful in his work, and that from a two-fold account; to wit, as considering such a conviction of the consciences of men, (for we are now considering the effect and the aptitude of this application to produce and work it,) I say, considering this conviction of men's consciences,—1st. As the direct way to their conversion. And, 2ndly, As that which however gains for the great God a testimony in their own very souls.

1st, It is a mighty encouraging thing, as it is the direct way to their conversion. If men be convinced, if the words of the Gospel do once take hold of their consciences, this leads to conversion, it hath a tendency thitherward; and though we do not know that we convince the consciences of men, we do not certainly know it, but when we are told: we sometimes are told, some do come to us, and own their convictions, and declare them to us: yet if we do but hope from the very evidence of what we see, that conscience is taken hold of, that some conviction is impressed on the consciences of them that hear us; this hope invigorates, enlivens, animates us, helps somewhat against fainting in our work. "Having this hope," (saith the apostle in the close of the foregoing chapter, and referring to the self-same thing,) "we use great boldness of speech;" we read it plainness of speech, boldness it signifies; having this hope, we use great *parresy*, we use great freedom of speech; we speak as men that do expect to prevail, as those that look not to be baffled, nor to be disappointed in what we are designing in this matter, in our treaties and transactions with the souls, and especially with the consciences, of men. We use great freedom of speech, having this hope, saith he; and so in the following chapter, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men; we persuade men and are made manifest to God, and we trust, also, we are manifest in your consciences, 2 Cor. v. 11. We trust we are, we hope we are manifest in your consciences; and therefore we persuade with so much the more vigour and so much the more earnestness, as apprehending, as trusting, and hoping, that you do in your consciences believe the things to be true, and real, and important, that we deal with you about; and that this must needs be a very enlivening thing, and tends much to animate a serious minister of Christ, and one who is in good earnest with his work, will appear if you do but consider these two things;—1st, What reason a man hath to hope, that conviction of conscience may end in conversion. And, 2ndly, Consider how encouraging a thing this hope of conversion must itself be. These two things are distinctly to be considered, to make out our present purpose.

1. There is reason to hope, that when conviction hath taken hold of men's consciences, it may end in conversion; and so the hope of this, arising from the very plain evidence of thin s, that there is some conviction wrought in the

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minds and consciences of men, it gives ground to a further hope, to a higher hope; if they become convinced, more may become of it. If our blessed Lord Jesus Christ hath by this means made way into their consciences, it is to be hoped he will find a way into their hearts; and sure the hope of converting souls is not altogether without ground, if we may hope that there are convictions wrought in the mind and conscience, and that upon these several accounts, to wit,

(1.) This is the only way by which, ordinarily and according to the constitution of human nature, the hearts of men are accessible. They are accessible but this way, that is, through their convinced consciences—they are not otherwise accessible, than as light is let into their consciences, by which they may discern the truth, the greatness, the importance, the necessity of the things themselves that we deal with them about. And,

(2.) This is the gaining of a soul in part, the convincing of his conscience, the design is an entire conquest of the whole soul; this is a work that consists of parts, and is to be done by parts; and when the conscience is won, here is part of this work done, and there is so much the less behind; there is less to do than if men's consciences were not in the least apprehensive as yet what they were to believe, or what they were to do in order to their being saved.

(3.) The very leading part, the introductive part, of the work is done, when this is done; when conscience is convinced about the great things proposed to men in the Gospel; so that they say, I do in my conscience apprehend this to be reasonable, just, and necessary, which I am required to do by the same Gospel; when this (I say) is done, the leading introductive part of the work is done. As in going about to take a rebel garrison, there is a mighty thing done if a port be gained, and especially if the noblest port belonging to such a garrison be taken. And it is the apostle's similitude afterwards in this Epistle, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, and the subjecting every thought and imagination to the obedience of Christ." The conscience of practical judgment is subjected, so that we have an end of men's counter-risings; they have nothing in their judgment to oppose, their imaginations they are gained, their notions, their thoughts, their apprehensions are certified and set right in these points. This is now a great thing, for it is the leading thing, and the introductive thing, in order to the work of conversion. The judgment, which, (I say,) in reference to matters of practice, is conscience; that is the leading faculty, and when once that is gained, and a conquest is obtained over that, it is as if, in the taking (as was said) of a rebel garrison, the counterscarp is won, or the great port-royal is won, which is a great thing. And,

(4.) Not only when conscience is convinced is the soul so far won, gained, subdued, and brought under; but it is also turned against the rest that hold out, as if in the taking of some principal fortress; besides that the opposition from what part is gained ceaseth, suppose a battery be placed there against the rest that stands out; and this is the case, when conscience is once brought under conviction by the power and evidence of the great things of the Gospel; here is a battery placed against an obstinate will, against perverse inclinations, against unruly, tumultuous affections and passions; so that now the man is made to batter himself, if conscience be once convinced; but if there be an inclination in the sinner still to persist, and go on in his way of sin, he doth it at his own peril, and even at his own peril from himself, for a convinced conscience will infer this, that he must be continually battering himself, and galling himself, and shooting arrows and darts against himself.

And when the matter is once brought to this, there is some hope in the case that the sinner will turn, is like to turn, for there is not only so much of his strength gone for persevering in a sinful course, but it is turned and bent against him. Christ hath now got a party within him, and the colours of our great Lord and Redeemer are displayed in the fort-royal, he is then demanding entrance into the soul. Let the everlasting gates of the soul fly open, that the King of glory may enter in; the kingdom of God is nigh, just at the door, even at the very door, when conscience is convinced about the great things of the Gospel, the very port is taken, and the ensigns of our glorious Lord displayed there, so that it must require a great deal of obstinacy against him; now that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are so very near at the door, and the voice of the summons sounds at the gate, Sinner, surrender now to thy rightful Lord, yield or perish. If this be said to him, and he is convinced already, I have no other way but to yield or die, and there is hope of safety in yielding; this carries a great appearance that conversion is towards, the matter is drawing to a blessed issue with such a poor soul. And,

(5.) When conscience is thus gained and won upon by so immediate direct application to it in the management of this work, the way is now open for the intromitting and setting in whatsoever considerations besides may be of any use towards the bringing of the soul to a surrender and compliance with the Lord Jesus; that closure with him wherein the work of conversion doth most formally consist and lie; a turning to the Lord, as the expression is in the close of the foregoing chapter. If conscience be convinced, then is here way made for terrible considerations to be let in upon the soul. And if conscience be convinced, here is way made for most comfortable considerations to be let in upon the soul too; the way is open to reach and apply both these great principles of fear and of hope, which are mighty engines, by which the souls of men are turned this way or that; her, are all the tremendous considerations that can be thought of, for which way is open, if conscience be convinced, I am a sinner, a guilty creature, I lie obnoxious to Divine justice and revenge every moment; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, they are my portion; nothing else is due to me. And then, at the same time, if conscience be convinced of the truth of the Gospel, here is an open way made for all consolatory considerations that might move the principle of hope; Christ is represented as ready to receive a returning soul. The sinner must be supposed to believe, in his own conscience, that it is most certainly true, Christ will not reject a poor soul that throws itself at his feet, as ready to perish; "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." In my conscience, must the sinner say, I believe this is true; he would never have come down into this world and become man, and have died on a cross, to save sinners, if he would throw away a soul that returns to him, and casts itself upon him; I believe in my conscience, this is true, that as I am lost if I come not to a closure with the Son of God in believing, so I cannot but be safe if I do. Again,

(6.) There is reason for this hope that such convictions may end in conversion, because that very ministry that is thus directed to conscience, that is levelled at conscience, and hath done it with such effect already, is the ministration of the Holy Ghost, the ministration of the Spirit and life, as it is largely discoursed in the foregoing chapter throughout, and which makes the apostle say, "having this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." This ministry; what ministry? Not a dead letter, but an animated ministry; that is, (as it were,) the very vehicle of life and spirit; therefore, we faint not; therefore we go on with all the vigour which a lively hope can give us in our work; as if he should have said, Why should we not hope to prevail, when we apply ourselves to the spirits of men, of creatures that can understand, that can use thought? Our business doth not lie with stocks, and stones, and brutes; but we apply ourselves to the very consciences of men, the very spirits of men; and we do it under the conduct of the Divine Spirit, whose ministration it is that is put into our hands; why then should we not hope to prevail? Why should we not hope, that they that come unconverted, should go away converted, at least if we can prevail upon them so far as that they are once brought to admit of conviction? And yet,

(7.) There is further reason for this hope, from what hath been done already in the same way, and by the same agency. We have read of thousands that have fallen under the power of this ministry; thousands at once, as in that, Acts ii. 37. who have been pierced to the very

heart, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Heart doth comprehend and take in conscience there; the governing faculty, together with the governed, as is usual in Scripture, to take heart in that latitude. A serious faithful servant of Christ in this work, hath reason to argue thus; *Quicquid fieri potuit potest.* That which hath been done, and by the same agency, that method which hath succeeded to so happy purposes before, the like may be done again in the same way, by the same agency, and in the same method, why should not we expect, why should not we hope for it? especially if we add,

(8.) Lastly, that this ministry, in connexion with the same power and presence, is promised to be continued to the end of the world; "Go and teach all nations;" I appoint you to go and make my claim to all the creation; for all power is given me, both in heaven and earth; and go you and teach all nations; disciple them, proselyte them to me; gather in the world, lay my claim for me, and in my name, to all the world, and tell men every where what I am, the Redeemer, and what I have, by my blood, the price of that redemption, purchased, even an absolute dominion and power over all the world; I died, and was buried, and rose again, that I might become Lord both of living and dead. All power hereby is consigned and made over to me, and by virtue of that power, I commission you: go forth every where, and challenge the world, upon that account, to submit to me, their rightful Lord. And herein lies being converted, when the hearts of men are brought seriously to do so, to recognize the Redeemer's right, and to make an absolute surrender and resignation of their souls to him, and to God through him. Now this ministry, and thus attended, is promised to continue to the end of the world: "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world." We know very well those particular persons were to shut up their time with that age, and yet this work was always to go on till the end of time, and through all ages: and why should not we expect, who come with the same authority and commission, but that when we do, in the business of this ministry, apply ourselves directly to the consciences of men in the sight of God, there should still be some success, even as long as this world lasts, and as long as this ministry lasts, why should we not always hope? But then,

2. Supposing there be ground for such a hope, that our applying ourselves to the consciences of men, so as to convince them, may end in conversion, how doth it appear this hope is encouraging? If there be reason for this hope, is there any reason to be assigned why this hope should give courage, vigour, and liveliness, to those that are employed in this work? The evidencing that there is, will rest upon two things; 1st, That the faithful ministers of Christ do very seriously desire the conversion of souls; and, 2dly, That the hopefulness of what a man desires cannot but be a very enlivening thing to the spirit of any man. Let these two be put together, and it evidenceth our present purpose; that is, that the serious ministers of the Gospel do desire the conversion of souls, and that the hopefulness of any thing that a man desires, must needs be very reviving and consolatory to him.

1. The former of these doth sufficiently speak itself; and I doubt not, in all your consciences, you never knew any minister of Christ, whom you had any reason to look upon as serious in his work, but you could not but apprehend him very much to desire the conversion of souls: for,

(1.) It is the very end of their office. How can it be but we must desire to reach the end for which our very office itself is appointed, and for which we were put into it?

(2.) The desire of the conversion of souls, it is nothing else but spiritualized humanity; that is, supposing we do believe a future state, or (as the apostle expresseth it in the next chapter) do in any measure understand the terrors of the Lord, the terrors of the judgment day, which is there referred to; "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men. And herein we are manifest unto God, and we trust, also in your consciences." You must suppose if we should understand and know any thing of the terrors of the Lord, and of a judgment day, that we must desire the conversion of souls: you will not look upon us as so inhumane creatures, that we should have a prospect before our eyes of so dreadful a destruction as unconverted souls will certainly fall into, and not desire their escape, not desire they may fly "from the wrath to come;" effectually so to fly as to escape that wrath. And again,

(3.) It is a required conformity to our blessed Lord, in whose name we come to you, whom we find to have been a mighty lover of souls. Did not his descent into this world testify it? Was not his death upon the cross the most significant? And is not the remembrance of it a standing testimony hereof? And how can we bear his name, and sustain to be called the ministers of Christ, and not mightily desire the conversion of souls? And,

2. If we do, then the hope of it cannot but be a very enlivening and encouraging thing. The hopefulness of what a man desires, and hath his heart set upon, carries the most invigorating power with it that any thing can be supposed to do. For,

(1.) It is very plain, despair of any design or undertaking damps all endeavours. No man can rationally endeavour that whereof he hath no hope. It sinks a man's spirit to be engaged in a work in which, from time to time, he can hope to do nothing, as common experience and the reason of things do speak. And,

(2.) On the other hand, it is very plain, that hope is the great engine which keeps the world in motion, and at work every where; it is the spring of all action all the world over, and of every kind whatsoever; the intelligent world, I mean. No man propounds an end to himself, but the hope of effecting it is the very thing that sets him and keeps him on work through the whole course of that endeavour that is requisite to it. The merchant trades in hope; yea, and (go to the very meanest employment) the ploughman ploughs in hope, and sows in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope. And sure we are not in our work to deviate from the common rules that guide all mankind in every undertaking whatsoever, and that doth influence them throughout that undertaking. Why are not we (think you) to plough in hope, and sow in hope, that we may be partakers of our hope?

Then, these two things being evident, that it is in the eyes of serious ministers of Christ a desirable thing; and that they that do seriously desire it, must needs be very much encouraged in their design and endeavour of it, when it doth appear to them a hopeful thing; so far as there is hope that the conviction that is taking hold of the consciences of men, may end in their conversion. Then this apprehension must needs contribute a great deal to their not fainting in their work, who are in good earnest engaged in it. I might add,

(3.) That it is an encouraging thing, a heart-strengthening thing, thus to apply ourselves to the very consciences of men in the pursuit of this work, that however it will be as to the former thing, yet we are sure to gain, in men's consciences, a testimony for the great God. If conscience be but convinced, if we can so far recommend ourselves to the consciences of men, as that they come to be convinced, this is truth, this is duty, here lies my danger, there lies my hope. If men are in their consciences convinced of these things, and yet will go on in their destructive ways in the paths that lead down to the chambers of death, we have gained this, however, that, if they will go on, if they will perish, it will be a testimony for God in their own consciences. And this will be a great thing: for, as it follows presently after, in the 5th verse of this chapter, "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Not ourselves finally, but only ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake; and therefore his interest and his concernment must be greater and highest in our eyes: it is to him, therefore, we owe the principal deference and highest honour. And there will be a convincing testimony for him in your very consciences, whether you turn or not turn. If we can but prevail so far, in applying to conscience, as to convince it, you will go down with conviction into the place of torment, and thereby a testimony will be gained for our glorious Lord, that his overtures were all

easy, all reasonable, all kind, and all indulgent: and this is a great thing we shall have gained, though it be but *secunda post naufragium tabula.* It is a consolation, though it be a consolation against a sad case, a very sad case, that any should descend to perdition, from under the Gospel, with convinced consciences.

But no more of this at present.

SERMON VII.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

WE have considered the words, according to what they import in themselves, and we have it now in hand to consider them, according to that reference which they bear to those of the foregoing verse. "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;" whence we have collected,—That the application which the faithful ministers of Christ do make to the consciences of men in the sight of God, affords them very great relief and encouragement to go on with an unfainting vigour and resolution in their work; and we proposed to show that it is so, upon a double account, to wit, the convictiveness, and the sincerity of it: the convictiveness of it towards them, and the sincerity of it towards God. We have hitherto been showing you how encouraging it is upon the former account, in respect of the convictiveness of the thing; and so it is encouraging upon a twofold more particular account.

1st, As thereby there is very great hope conceived of conversion. And,

2dly, As hereby a testimony is, however, gained to the great God and our Lord Jesus Christ in the very consciences of men. The former was fully insisted on; and now I go on further, to the second, to wit, That the convictiveness of such application tends to gain a testimony to our great God and Saviour in their very souls. And this is a very encouraging thing, a heart-strengthening thing, to a serious faithful minister of Christ, that he shall hereby gain such a testimony in men's consciences for God and his blessed Son. They will be obliged to acknowledge and own, that the great truths of the Gospel, upon which the principal weight and stress is laid, as to their salvation, do carry a clear and convictive evidence with them; and that they are required to believe nothing to this purpose, which is not most evidently true; but must be forced to say,—I think, in my very conscience, these things are so; they are as they are represented; I am not imposed upon; there is no fraudulency or artifice used to disguise things, or to make them seem otherwise than they are. And thus it is also with the things we are to do, and we are warned to avoid, as by no means to be done; and likewise, the constitutions and judgments we find settled and declared in the Gospel concerning them that do well, and them that do ill, and that are to be the last measures of the final judgment, are all most unexceptionably equal and righteous; we have nothing to say against them, and so, concerning the whole frame and design of the Gospel, that it is wisely adapted to its end; that it carries that efficacy with it, when once it takes hold of conscience, that men must say, Here is a power not to be withstood; we cannot resist the power and spirit wherewith such and such things are spoken; things come to us in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit and of power; they must say there is kindness and love beyond all that could be expected or conceived in the whole frame and contrivance of it; here is manifestly a design to pluck souls out of death, to reduce backsliders unto God, to save lost creatures from perishing; and upon the whole, therefore, here must be a testimony gained to the truth of God, to his authority, to the equity and reasonableness of his laws and sanctions, to his wonderful wisdom, which he hath shown in methodizing things so as the Gospel acquaints us, in order to the recovery and salvation of souls; and to his kindness, goodness, and mercifulness, towards poor perishing sinners, beyond all that could have entered into the heart of man to expect. It is plain, that when such applications are made immediately, directly, and properly to conscience, such a testimony is gained to the great God and Saviour in all these respects.

And now it is evident, that this cannot but be an encouraging thing to every serious faithful minister of Christ; for you must consider (as they will do) to whom they do belong; they consider whose they are, and whom they are obliged to serve: and if these two things be eyed and looked upon together; to wit, that glorious Lord to whom they are related, and their most entire devotedness and fidelity to him; these two things concurring, cannot but make such encouragement as this arise naturally from the above-mentioned ground.

1. It is to be considered, that the Lord, to whom they are related, he is infinitely more than all this world; the whole creation is but a tittle, a nothing to him, his honour and glory are more worth than all things. If all this world, as it was raised up out of nothing, were presently to be reduced to nothing again, that is a thing little to be mattered, in comparison, if we bring it into comparison with the glory of this great name: which glory will shine satisfying to itself, even to all eternity, whatsoever should become of this created sphere and universal thing; consider this in the state of their case. And then, consider,

2. That in the temper of their minds, there must be entire devotedness and fidelity to this great Lord: and so as the glory of his name is a greater thing in itself than all things besides, so it must be to them; because, with their relation to this great Lord, there is conjunct that most entire affection and devotedness to him, that whatever becomes of all things else, this must always be principal in their eye, the glory of the great Lord: you find, therefore, that this is the main design they drive at, and are obliged to do in all their ministrations; that is, that there be such convictions upon the consciences of men, as from whence a glory may result, "a glorious testimony unto God in Christ," saith the apostle, (speaking of his own labours in the ministry,) "according to my expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, (that my heart should never sink through shame, nor through fear,) but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death," Phil. iii. 17—20. If one had said to him, What need you toil and harass yourself in such labours, and to run such hazards as you do, in a continual course? What are you to gain by it? Gain, saith he, why I shall gain my point. I shall gain my great design, the only thing I am solicitous for, and the only thing, in comparison, that I aim at; that is, that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death; whether I live, or whether I die, all is one to me; I am content to run through a thousand deaths for the glory of that name;—that that name may be glorified in my living and dying. Here is a continual glory arising to that name out of this application to men's conscience, when all men, out of conviction of conscience, must be forced to own and acknowledge the truth, and authority and righteousness, the power, wisdom, and goodness, which are all comprehended in this great name: and therefore it is, that the ministers of Christ are to make this a measure to themselves, in all their ministrations, to direct them to this very end and mark; that is, the bringing men under such convictions, that a just testimony may result to this great name,—the name and honour of their glorious Lord. The apostle's reasonings do most evidently imply this, which you find he useth in that 14th chapter of his former epistle to these Corinthians, verse 24; he is there directing and ordering how they should order, manage, and methodize their ministrations, so as that they might be most apt to convince; that they should prefer plain instructive words, before strange tongues, though that might very much amuse, and gain to them (it may be) a great deal of applause, that such and such could speak in assemblies so many languages; but, (saith the apostle,) when the business of instruction by prophecy,

* Preached March 8th, 1690.

(as the word must there be used, and it is frequently, when that is attended to,) if there comes in one that is unlearned, such an one is convinced of all, and judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. This, (saith the apostle,) I must have all your ministrations directed unto; you must aim at this, to carry things so, that the hitherto pagan world, (as they shall have opportunity to observe and know what things are taught among you,) from the plain evidence of the things, may be judged and condemned in their own spirits, and may be brought down on the knee, to fall and kneel, and confess God is in the midst of this people; God is in these ministrations of a truth: you must order things so, that this end may be effectually obtained, observably gaining a testimony to God out of the consciences of those you shall have to do with; and if this be any one's end, upon which his heart is set, upon which he is principally intent, according as his success is, in order to this, his great and principal end, so will his encouragement be, and the strength and vigour of his spirit in prosecuting his work: according as his labour is either more actually successful, or hopeful, accordingly is his spirit raised up and kept up within him in his work; and this is a thing which carries its own proper right with it, whether it do fall in with the conversion of souls, or whether it be severed from it.

(1.) If it fall in with it, it adds the greater weight to it, for the poising and bearing up a man's spirit in his work; for then this testimony ariseth so much the more clearly, and so much the more fully, when it proceeds at once from the concurrence of an enlightened mind and convinced conscience; and also, a renewed changed heart, when it is the sense of the mind, and of the heart, together. Oh, how joyful and raised a testimony do convinced and converted ones bear to the truth, and righteousness, and authority, and wisdom, and power, and grace of God in Christ! When hearts are won, with what complacency do they then celebrate all the glories that have shone forth to them with efficacy and success, through the Gospel dispensation! What pleasure do they take to speak highly of his great name, whose power they have felt, whose light they have seen, whose grace they have tasted of, in and by this dispensation! But then,

(2.) If these should be severed, yet so much the greater thing is a testimony to the great God, and his Christ; that there is in that case, more to poise and weigh up the spirit of a faithful servant of Christ, than there can be in the want of the other, to sink and press it down. These two things being compared with one another, the glorious testimony that is borne to this name, and the actual infelicity of a soul, which hath refused to be happy, and did peremptorily choose the way to perdition, that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death; so much a greater thing is the former of these, than the latter, that there is more to buoy up the spirit of a faithful servant of Christ in his ministerial work, than there can be to press and sink it down.

And so, upon that former account; to wit, the convictiveness of such an application to the conscience, doth very great encouragement arise to those that are faithful in their work of preaching the Gospel, to go on with unfainting vigour in it, as this convictive application to conscience, both is the way to the conversion of souls; and also, as it tends to gain a testimony to the name of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

But then, as we have to consider to this purpose the convictiveness of this application to conscience, so we have to consider well in the next place,

3. The sincerity of such application to conscience: we apply and commend ourselves to the consciences of men, in the very sight of God under the eye of God; he sees our aim and design, and our whole transaction, from step to step, from point to point; there is no thought in our minds, no word in our mouths to this purpose, but comes all under his immediate notice and cognizance; and hence ariseth our strength and vigour in our work, hence it is we faint not; we serve our Lord Christ, we serve the great God, to whom we have devoted ourselves under his own eye. To the sincere, it is a great consolation their sincerity is known; one may serve a man in great sincerity, and yet never be understood, for he cannot look into the thoughts, he cannot discern the intention and bent of the heart; but when every thing lies open (as we know it doth) to his immediate view, with whom we have to do, and for whom we are concerned, this is a very encouraging thing to the sincere to know that it is known. It escapes not the especial notice of his eye, in whose approbation and complacency we are most of all concerned; for hereupon, these two most encouraging things do most necessarily succeed and follow;—1st, That by this, their sincerity, they are directly and immediately in a good posture towards God, so as to receive the highest encouragement from him. And, 2dly, They are consequentially, by most manifest and direct consequence, in a good state towards men; so as at least, from them, not to receive any hurtful or sinking discouragement: I say, it puts their affairs into a good posture towards God, from whom they are to have the highest encouragement; and it puts them consequentially into so good a posture towards men, as that, from thence, they shall receive no hurtful, heart-dejecting, or heart-sinking discouragement. As to God, 1st, As to the former, the posture and state wherein it puts their affairs towards God, is, 1st, They are sure of acceptance. And, 2dly, They are sure of reward; be the success of their ministration what it will or can be supposed to be, or the worst that can be supposed.

They shall be accepted with God, and shall not lose their reward, whatever the issue of their labour be. Some scriptures do conjoin these together, or give us good ground upon which to apprehend the certain conjunction of them, that they are not severed one from another, as in the nature of the thing we are sure they cannot be. Do but observe to this purpose that known and famous place, Isa. xlix. 5. It is spoken directly and principally of our great Lord himself; but it is applicable, in a subordinate sense, most justly unto all that do serve under him. In the third verse of that chapter, it is said, "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." And verse 4th, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." That name of Israel is put upon him, as sometimes, elsewhere, the name of Jacob is, as signifying Christ-mystical, and comprehending all his people with him and in him. "Then I said, I have laboured in vain: yet, surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now saith the Lord, that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob to him; Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." I shall not stay to dilate (as I might with much point) upon this scripture. Again, look back to the 2nd chapter of this epistle, where our text lies, and you will see, from the 14th verse onward, much to this same purpose. The apostle speaks of the pleasant savour which the faithful ministers of Christ do carry with them in their ministrations, or in respect to the Gospel which they dispense, both in reference to them that are saved, and in reference to them that perish. "Thanks be to God, (saith he,) which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, (and they that triumph in Christ are far from fainting,) and maketh manifest by us, the savour of his knowledge in every place; for we are to God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, we are the savour of life unto life." It is true that we are so; a sweet savour of God in Christ to the one and the other, or in reference to the one and the other. And where there is a certain acceptation, there is a certain reward, which, when our Lord himself did eye, we are not disallowed to eye, you may be sure; "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despised the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of God," Heb. xii. 3. That great and eminent servant of his, Moses, it is recorded of him, not as a blemish, but to his honour, that he had respect to the recompense of reward, Heb. xi. 7. And the apostle Paul tells concerning himself, when he avowed himself to be the apostle and servant of Jesus Christ, (as in the beginning of his epistle to Titus,) he adds, "in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised;" as if he would by that answer an inquiry, which

(it may be) some, who had heard of his name, might wonderingly make, What should be the matter that Paul, that wise man, that learned man, that man so strenuous an assertor of Judaism, and so devoted to the strictest sect of Pharisaism, should suffer himself to be imposed upon, so as to espouse the despised Christian name and interest? He, it seems, is become a minister of the Gospel of Christ, a servant of him that was crucified at Jerusalem not long ago, as a common malefactor; how comes such a one as Paul to espouse that interest and profess that name? Why, I do it, (saith he,) "in hopes of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised." Here is enough to keep me from fainting and sinking in this work, may a faithful minister of Christ say, notwithstanding whatsoever of labour and toil it carries in it; and, notwithstanding whatsoever inconvenience it may draw after it; it is all in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised. And they know their Master and Lord that employs them, that he who will not suffer so mean a thing as a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, to lose its reward, will never let a devoted life, spent in his service, and in an endeavour of serving that great design of his, which his heart doth so appear to be always set upon, the saving of souls, to lose a correspondent reward; therefore, such sincerity, in applying to the consciences of men in the sight of God, knows who sees it, who judgeth of it, carries in it encouragement enough, directly God-ward, and Christ-ward, from whom they are encouraged, and principally concerned to expect and seek it.. But,

As to men. 2dly, It carries enough in it by consequence, to fortify them against every thing of discouragement from men. What is there from men to discourage? Principally two things, reproach and danger. They may be liable to reproach, but sincerity is guard against it. "According to my earnest expectation, and my hope," (saith the apostle,) "that in nothing I shall be ashamed," Phil. i. 20. And so in the words immediately before the text, "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, or shame, (as the word may be rendered,) not walking in craftiness, or handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending," &c. And, as in the close of the 2nd chapter of this epistle, "We are not as many which corrupt the word of God," (adulterate it, *καπηλεύοντες* it,) "but as of sincerity, as of God speak we in Christ." We do nothing we need to be ashamed of, as long as we do but apply ourselves about such things as carry their own evidence in them to the consciences of men. Our work admits well enough to be done aboveboard; we need seek no corner, no darkness, no shadow of death, wherein to lie hid; we may well go open-faced in all that we do; we have no other design, but to convince men, and bring them back from their destructive ways, and finally, become instruments of their being safe and happy.

And then for any thing of danger; it is true, they may be liable thereto, even from them whom they do convince: convictions do sometimes work that unnatural way, that is, to enrage, to exasperate; we read of some who were pricked to the heart, who cried out thereupon, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts ii. 37. We read of others cut to the heart by that sermon of the first martyr, Stephen, Acts vii. 54. And they, thereupon, immediately gnash their teeth; and their business is to gather up stones, and stone him to death. This, it is true, may be, and admit it to be so, the sincere desire of his glory for whom they so expose themselves in their ministration, approving itself to his very eye, carries enough in it to fortify them against the most formidable appearances of this kind. The apostle makes this supposition, even of running the hazard of a fiery trial; when he is exhorting them that speak, "to speak as becomes the oracles of God," 1 Pet. iv. 11. And with this same design, that our great Lord, for whom we speak, may be glorified, may have a glorious testimony arising to him. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." And the very next words are, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is sent to try you;" never be concerned for yourselves, though there be danger of a fiery trial incurred, if you can but be conscious to yourselves of your own sincerity, that you speak as becomes the oracles of God, with this design, that God and our Lord Jesus may be glorified." And so doth the transaction of all this affair, in the sight of God, carry with it a great matter of encouragement; that is, sincerity puts our affairs directly into the best posture that can be wished, towards God and Christ; and leaves them not in so ill a posture towards men, as that any thing should be feared from them, or can possibly arise from them, to cause dejection or despondency of spirit, in any one who is with such sincerity engaged in this great work.

USE. Therefore, now briefly to apply all:—there are sundry things, which it is obvious to collect and gather from all that hath been said to this point, that may be very useful and instructive to us. As,

1. That such as are sincerely, and with due seriousness, engaged in the work of the ministry, they cannot but be solicitous about the issue of their work, how it will succeed, what will become of it; they do, (it is true,) through the mercy of God, go on in their work without fainting, as it is their business to apply themselves to the consciences of men, in the sight of God; but yet, with very great concern; for what do they apply themselves to the consciences of men about? It is about things upon which their salvation depends,—it is, that they may not be lost. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." We consider them as perishing creatures, if our Gospel should be hid from them; therefore we make it our business to apply ourselves to their consciences, in the sight of God, that it may not be hid. And hence is our not fainting; it shows in those that do seriously concern themselves, and serve Christ in the work of the ministry: there is great solicitude about the issue of their work, lest souls should miscarry and be lost under it.

2. We may collect, that the true reason of this solicitude is the uncertainty of the issue; they do not know how matters will succeed with them about whom they are concerned. It may be life, it may be death; it may be they will be saved, it may be they will be lost; some may be the one, some may be the other. Seeing that they need support against fainting, it shows that they are solicitous, and whence their solicitude doth arise, and what is the true cause of it; and though it is true indeed, there is support from the consciousness of their own sincerity, and from the aptitude of such means as they use, that souls may not be lost; yet, all this while, the dubiousness and uncertainty of the event doth so much deject them, and make them liable to fainting, that they reckon it a very great mercy that they do not faint: "therefore, having such a ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." It is the mercy of God to us that we sink not, nor faint in our work, to think how little hold is taken upon the consciences of men, and how apt men are to run counter to the conviction of their own consciences. It is God's great mercy we do not faint, and quite give off, and say, we will never speak in this name more, to be so little heard, regarded, attended to, and complied with in the design of all that we say. And again,

3. We may gather hence, that God hath so graciously ordered the matter, that the very cause of a faithful minister's solicitude shall yield him the matter of his relief; that is, his sincerity, his applying himself to the consciences of men in the sight of God. It is a man's sincerity in this case, that makes him be concerned, for they that are insincere, will never be concerned; they care not what becomes of their hearers, if they can but discourse plausibly an hour when they must, they are little further concerned. But then, (I say,) observe the goodness of God, that from the same thing, whence their concern comes, their relief comes; that is, their sincerity; if they were not sincere, they would not be concerned: but, because they are sincere, thereby they are relieved, they transact all in the sight of God; and so, the same thing that gives them trouble, gives them relief.

4. We may further gather hence, that where there is the least need of relief, there is the least to be had. They have no need of relief against any solicitude, and heart-affecting concern, about the issue and success of their work, who are not sincere in it; and thereupon they have

not that relief which otherwise would arise in this case. These things do measure one another: where no relief is needful, none is had. They need no relief, where there is no concern; and they have none, because they are not sincere. And again,

5. It is plain, that the safety of souls that do attend upon the Gospel dispensation, and the comfort of their ministers, do very much depend upon the same thing; that is, the successfulness of the application to conscience in the sight of God. If conscience be first convinced, and those convictions be complied with, and answered in the inclination of the heart, and course of the outward practice, such souls are safe and happy; and, according to the prospect and appearance that can be had hereof, those who are engaged in this great design of saving them, are relieved and comforted so much abundantly the more; their fullest consolation, and the salvation and happiness of the souls they are concerned for, meet in the same point. And therefore, again,

6. If any do miscarry under the Gospel, by which, and in the ministration whereof, applications are still made to their consciences in the sight of God, they perish under a double guilt, as having not only been accessary to their own ruin, but to the discouragement, as much as in them lies, of those in their work, that were intent upon saving them. And this is a double guilt,—guilty of their own ruin, and guilty of the sorrow and solicitude, and afflicting care and grief, of them that would have saved them. And that this consideration doth not weigh nothing, you may plainly see, in that such use is made of it, as we find elsewhere. This apostle urgeth the Christians, Philip. ii. 16. that they would demean themselves "as sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they lived, and shined as lights in the world:" that, as light was, through the word of God in the Gospel, let into their consciences, it might shine through again in their conversations, that they might hold forth the word of life; and why? upon what design or consideration? "That we may be comforted," that we may rejoice, as not having run in vain, or laboured in vain. Whatsoever greater weight there was to be in the consideration of their own salvation, and eternal well-being, this consideration also was not without its weight; it cannot be said of it, that it had no weight. That we may rejoice, too, and rejoice with you, in the day of Christ, as not having run in vain, or laboured in vain. But, in the last place,

7. We may further collect, that, if there be a final disappointment as to any, so that (as the expression is after the text) they come at length to be "lost;" and here is the utmost cause given, that can be given from men, of discouragement and heart-fainting to the ministers of Christ; yet all doth proceed from men's baffling their consciences: these dreadful consequences do result from thence. If men would but use their consciences, and be true to their consciences; if they would but receive the truth whereof conscience is convinced, and comply with the precepts and rules that conscience doth discern the equity and necessity of, all would be well; we should be comforted, and you would be saved. But if neither of these be, you see whence all proceeds; it is from baffling of conscience, from either its not admitting of conviction, or its not complying with conviction that hath been admitted. Therefore, I shall shut up all with this only double word of counsel; that is,

1. That you labour to keep conscience always awake, and bring it awake to such attendances upon the dispensation of the preaching of the Gospel; labour aforehand to pre-engage conscience; tell your souls beforehand, when you are to come to such an assembly as this, O my soul, thou art going to a place where thy conscience is to be dealt withal, and in the sight of God! there is a great transaction to lie between thee and some or other servant of Christ, and the whole business is managed under the Divine eye; then say to thy conscience, Awake! awake! be in a prepared posture, in a ready posture: let me not carry conscience slumbering, conscience dreaming, conscience in a deep sleep, unto such an ordinance, but labour to have it awake, in order hereunto: and that it may be so, urge upon it those former heads. That you may bring wakeful consciences to these holy assemblies, from time to time, you are very much concerned to keep them awake all the week long: if, from day to day, and from morning to night, you will buy and sell without conscience and eat and drink without conscience, and manage your affairs in your families without conscience, then it is likely you will come without conscience, or with a drowsy slumbering conscience, on the Lord's day, to the assembly too; you will find conscience on those days as you use it on other days. And then,

2. When you are under these holy assemblies, and particularly under the ministration of the Gospel, labour then to keep conscience in actual exercise, endeavour that your consciences may go along with all that is said, and put them on giving their assent, their actual assent: take it from them, that so you may be (as it were) preaching to yourselves all the while the minister is preaching to you; that conscience may be preaching over and over again; that there may be an echo within from conscience, repeating the very voice of the minister in your own hearts; and if this were done, if there were such a conscientious attendance upon this holy ministration, with respect to the eye that observes you, as well as us, and a design all along driven to one and the same purpose, to approve ourselves to that eye, we might hope somewhat would come of our having the Gospel so long continued among us, and of having our holy assemblies, with so much freedom to resort unto. But if nothing of this be, but still conscience must be kept asleep from duty to duty, there is nothing to be said, but that hereafter it will awake for torment.

SERMON VIII.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

UPON what hath been so largely discoursed to you from the immediately foregoing words, I know not how to overlook these, that are so immediately and apparently subjoined. Though they have much of terror in them, they may have much use, and may be useful (even as they are terrible) to promote and help our escape from that most terrible issue of things that they import. The reasonableness of their connexion with the foregoing words, is obvious to every eye: "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The reason of the thing speaks itself. If we do insist upon such matters as do carry in them a convictive self-recommending evidence to every man's conscience; if we do directly and immediately apply ourselves to the very consciences of men, in all our ministrations; if we endeavour to draw them into the Divine presence, and manage all our transactions with their very consciences, under God's immediate eye, and debate matters with their consciences before the throne of God; if this be our way of treating with the souls of men, so as that when they do not hear us,—will not listen to us, we do arrest them, we do arraign them; Come, I must have you into the presence of God, and debate the matter with you under the eye of him that made you, and that made me: if this be the course of our dealing with souls, and they will not hear, and our Gospel remains to them yet a hidden thing, it is all one to them, as if we had said nothing; if it "be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." This is the plain series of the discourse in this context.

And so the import of the words, in themselves, is as plain as any other words a man can make use of. This is the doctrine.

Doctrine. They to whom the Gospel of Christ is a hidden Gospel, they are lost souls.

* Preached March 22nd, 1690—91.

In speaking to this, we are, 1st, to open to you the meaning of the Gospel's being hid, the thing supposed here; and, 2dly, to show what is meant by being lost, the thing asserted upon that supposition; and then to show, 3dly, the connexion between the one and the other of these, upon which the use of the whole will ensue.

1. What is meant by the Gospel's being hid? It may be said to be hidden several ways according to the several ways wherein it may be said to be revealed. And there is a fourfold gradation to be taken notice of in the revealing of the Gospel, or the things contained in the Gospel, unto men, as there is a fourfold principle that is herein to be applied unto. As,

(1.) There is the principle of external sense, unto which the Gospel is first to be brought. "Faith comes by hearing," (Rom. x. 17.) as the apostle tells us. And then,

(2.) There is the principle of understanding and intellect, unto which that hearing is subservient and introductive: men are to hear, that they may understand; and it is a plague and doom upon them, when they hear and do not understand. And,

(3.) There is a principle of conscience, which is the mind and understanding, as it hath to do with practical matters; (as we have formerly told you;) being to judge concerning them, either as things to be done, or as things that have been done. And so we judge, either by way of prospect, or retrospect; as you have heard, conscience is the principle, and as such a principle, it is to be applied unto: so much we have lately insisted upon to you. And then,

(4.) Another principle is the heart, at which the Gospel revelation doth finally and terminatively aim. It aims more immediately at conscience, but ultimately, and finally, at the very heart, as you see afterwards in this very context: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." But how should it shine into them? or what of them should it shine into? The sixth verse tells you, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts to give us the light;" so that there are these several steps in the revelation of the Gospel, or of the things contained in the Gospel, unto men.

1. By the external sense, that by which that discovery is to be transmitted to the mind or understanding. And that it may be excluded, and shut out from thence, the god of this world is mightily industrious to blind men's minds, that the Gospel may meet with a stop there; not make its entrance so far. And then,

2. It is further aimed at to be revealed to men's consciences, that through the mind it may strike conscience, and fasten convictions upon men there, concerning what they are to do, or what they are not to do, or what they have, or what they have not done, or what they are thereupon to expect God to do, or not to do, against them, or for them. And then,

3. Finally, the Gospel is to be revealed to the very hearts of men. He that hath made the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone into our hearts, wherein the design of the god of this world is defeated and disappointed; so that the beams of Gospel light do strike through, (notwithstanding all the resistance and opposition he makes in the minds and consciences of men,) and, at length penetrating to the heart, hath shone into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And, accordingly, these several ways may the Gospel be said to be hid. As,

1. When it is never preached to a people at all; so the great things that it contains, and unfolds in itself, they remain a great and continued secret, as they may have done long to many a people, and yet do to very many. In that sense, for several foregoing ages, the Gospel had been an unrevealed thing, as we are told by the apostle, Rom. xvi. 25. "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." That Gospel which had been so long kept secret, it became then revealed, when the preaching of it was set on foot, even in all the several nations, by permission, there being no restraint, no prohibition, to preach it to any nation; no nation being excluded, but a commission given to preach it to all indefinitely; that is, to any as there should be opportunity. Now, it is said to be, in that sense, a hidden Gospel, the same thing that we have elsewhere: "The mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but is now made manifest to the saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, (Col. i. 26.) which is Christ in you, (or among you,) the hope of glory." That is one sense wherein the Gospel is a hidden Gospel. Where it is not so much as preached, nor hath been; where the external dispensation of it hath never come, there hath been no application made to men's external sense by it, or concerning it. This is not the direct intendment of the apostle here; he speaks to them whom he supposed to have had the Gospel hitherto, and at this time to have it. We are, in the Gospel dispensation, actually applying ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God, and yet he supposeth the Gospel to be hid. It is not hidden, therefore, in that sense; or its being so hid, that is here meant.

2. It may be hid when it is (though preached) not understood: and though it be revealed to the external sense, it is not revealed to the minds of men; and so, though there be an external light, there still needs an internal end, to make it, in the useful and designed sense, a revealed Gospel. So it often is, that men may sit very long underneath the dispensation of this Gospel, and yet remain very ignorant of the true import and meaning, even of the most principal and noble part of it, and which it is of the greatest concern for them to understand. The frame and scheme of Gospel truth and notions, it may have found no place in the minds of many that have long sat under the dispensation of it. They may have been yet ignorant (as the apostle speaks to those Christian Hebrews) which be the first principles of the oracles of God, though they had the Gospel long with them, whose design it is to acquaint them with, and instruct them in, these things. They may be such as the apostle elsewhere speaks of, as are ever learning and never come to the knowledge of the truth. And though they have this Gospel among them,—they have this book in their hands, yet it is a sealed book, and they have never concerned themselves to get it unsealed: they read it and yet it is sealed; they open it, and yet it is shut; really shut up. If one say to them, Understandest thou what thou readest? they do not. They hear the word as a tale that is told, that passeth through their ears, but enters not into their minds; so may things be said to be hid that get not so far; they pass not the tegument or involucrum of a dark mind, a blind mind that admits them not. The expression is of that import, in reference to a particular thing, that our Saviour had been discoursing of to his disciples often, when he was among them. It is said, that the saying did not enter into their minds, for it was hid from them; "They understood not this saying, and it was hidden from them, that they perceived it not," Luke ix. 45. The business was what he had foretold them of again and again, touching his own approaching sufferings: it met with obstructed minds; they could not endure to hear with that ear. There was the same sense latent with them all, which Peter was more alert and open in owning and speaking: "Master, favour thyself, these things shall not be unto thee." They who had so high an expectation of his temporal reign and kingdom, such a thing as this, though he had told it them over and over, and told them again, in this chapter, upon his transfiguration, or a little after, that such and such things he must suffer, such and such things should be done to him, it entered not into their minds, they perceived it not, it passed as water glides over a rock, that admits it not. And so it is with the greatest and most important truths of the Gospel that can be spoken about, that can be brought under their notice. Commonly they do give them the hearing when they come to such assemblies: they hear of the lost undone state of sinners, as they are such, and that there is reconciliation to be had by a Redeemer; but that Redeemer must and will have the

throne; have their hearts changed, and their natures renewed. God's kingdom must be set up in their souls, and in its power take place in them; and sensual lusts and inclinations must go down, be subdued and brought under. Men hear such things, but they do not enter into their minds, they will not allow them to sink into their minds; and so they hear them as if they heard them not. It cannot be said, they were never told them, that they never heard them. The first passage towards the heart, the ear, there the word goes through; but at the mind, there, with many, it stops. They do not, that is, they will not, bend their minds and understandings to take in so plain and so important things. And,

3. The Gospel, it may be hid from conscience; so, as though it do enter into the mind, there it meets with another obstruction; conscience excludes and shuts it out. Many will not allow themselves so much as to understand any thing of it; as many, too, will not allow themselves so much as to hear it,—keep quite out of the hearing; but if it be heard, and if it be understood, yet here, at this third passage, which it should have to the heart, it meets with obstruction; that is, conscience doth not admit of conviction about it, a conviction of what is to be done, or what hath been misdone, or unduly omitted to be done, and what is due hereupon in point of vindication of the jealous holy God. In this respect, the Gospel may still be an unrevealed Gospel; that is, that it doth not get into the consciences of men, so as to strike them with conviction about these things, and to make them see and determine, and pronounce a judgment within themselves: This and that, and the other thing, a holy righteous God hath required me to do, that I might live, is all equal, and righteous, and good. It is so far an unrevealed Gospel to them, that men will not be brought to see this, though it be never so plain; or again, to see that what I ought to have done, in order to my being in a reconciled state, and a safe and happy state, towards God, I have hitherto not done. I have not exercised repentance towards God; I have not believed on the Son of God; I have not come to a covenant closure with God in Christ; one thing or other, from day to day, hath shifted these important matters off; though I have heard, indeed, such and such things should be done, yet so much of life-time is worn away with me, and I could never find the hour, the leisure time, when to get into a corner, to enter into my closet, and shut myself up with God, and say, I am now come to thee about the affairs of my soul; to make over a soul unto thee, according to the tenor of thine own covenant, and there solemnly to take hold of that covenant, and give up that soul. "They gave themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God," 2 Cor. viii. So plain a thing as this is, the yielding themselves unto God, conscience will not see it, and be convinced, that thus it ought to be: but days, and months, and years, are worn out under the Gospel, and so great things as these omitted. Men are continually called upon to turn, that they may live; but they never find a time to turn. They will not settle this judgment with a convinced conscience, I must break off this course, or I am undone; that is, a course of estrangement from God, a living without God in the world. The Gospel is, in this sense, a hid and unrevealed Gospel; it doth not go so far as to take hold of conscience, though conscience is applied and appealed unto, from time to time. And then,

4. It is hid from their hearts, and that is another sense wherein the Gospel may be an unrevealed Gospel, as it is not yet effectually discovered; or the great things contained in it, are not with a penetrating light pierced into the heart, which is the thing the Gospel dispensation doth finally aim at. As you have it in this very context, the thing designed is, that through the ear, and through the mind, and through the conscience, the heart may be at last invaded, and the light of the Gospel may seat itself there, in that very centre of the soul, and so there become vital light, diffusive of power and influence through the whole man; and this is yet a heavier case, when conscience is convinced and yet the hearts of men are not struck, not struck through; the word doth not strike into them, as our Saviour said to the Jews: "My word hath no place in you;" you do not give it a place, it cannot find room; there is a resisting heart, that excludes and shuts it out.

It is in these latter senses that the Gospel must be understood to be spoken of as a hidden Gospel here, as the mind understands it not, or as the conscience is not convinced of it, or as the heart doth not entertain or give reception to it. You find, in the foregoing chapter, that the case of the Jews being spoken unto, upon the occasion of that comparison, which the apostle had been making, in the whole of that chapter, between the Mosaical or Judaical, (2 Cor. iii.) and the evangelical dispensation, he gives the preference (as there was cause) to the evangelical dispensation, far above the Mosaical and Judaical, in this respect, that there was a clearness which went with the Gospel dispensation, which did not accompany the Mosaical one; and, likewise, that there was a power and efficacy that went with the Gospel, that went not with the law. Towards the latter end of the foregoing chapter, he discourseth to them, that, in opposition to the former dispensation, there was a clearness of light in the latter dispensation. Whenever the law was read among the Jews, it was a veiled thing; he refers to that which is a usage among them, at this day, when the law is read, to have a veil covering them, as I have seen, (and it is like many of you have seen,) looking into their synagogues; but the apostle, you see, speaks there of the veil on the heart: which, as the former doth import opposition to the clearness and perspicuity of light, that did shine in the Gospel dispensation, this speaks somewhat opposite to that efficacy and power upon the heart, which did accompany that dispensation too; so as that souls should be transformed and changed by it, into the image and glory of it. "We all with open face, beholding, as in a glass;" so we read it, and we read it with disadvantage, considering the similitude that he had made use of before; for the word we read *open*, signifies unveiled, he having been, a little while before, speaking of the veil. "We all, with unveiled face, (so it should be, to make the matter clearer, though the sense be the same,) behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord;" but, for that poor people, they had a veil not only upon their faces, but a veil upon their hearts, so as that nothing should enter there. But when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away; when *it* shall, the expression is impersonal; when there shall be a turning to the Lord; when the season of the general turning of that people to the Lord shall be, the veil shall be done away. And now we, for the present, with unveiled face, behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image. And when the Gospel is hid in this sense, it is a very dismal thing; that is, that it should go through the ear, and through the mind, and through the conscience, and, after all this, stop at the very heart. A veil enwrapping the heart, shuts it up; light shines, shines round about in the external dispensation, shines into the mind, things are competently understood; shines into the conscience, and that is convinced that those things are true and right which the Gospel doth hold forth; and my practice, in reference thereunto, hath been wrong, injurious, altogether inexcusable, and, consequently, unsafe; and yet the heart holds out; this last fort yet surrenders not, is not taken; the glory of the Gospel is not revealed there, doth not shine into the heart, so as there to take in the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; as the 6th verse of this chapter speaks.

You may be sure, if there be a revelation in the last sense, there is a revelation in all the foregoing senses. If the Gospel be thus revealed in the very heart, then we may be sure it was in the conscience, it was so in the mind and understanding, and it hath been so in the external discovery and dispensation of the Gospel to the ear and outward sense. But if it had not been revealed in the first of these senses, it is in none of the rest. If you speak by way of affirmation, the affirmation of the last implies the affirmation of all the former; if you speak by way of negation, the negation of the first implies the negation of all the consequents.

But as was told you at first, on this occasion, that it is not the hiddenness of the Gospel, in the first sense, as having never been heard and preached, that is intended here; but in the latter sense it is chiefly meant; that is, if persons who hear this Gospel, never understanding it; or, understand it, but are never convinced of it; or are convinced of it, and their hearts are never altered never ef-

fectually changed by it,—then is the Gospel a hidden Gospel to them in the sense here meant.

And so the hiddenness of the Gospel in the intended sense, may be two-fold; or may be considered under two distinct notions, either as sinful or as penal.

I. As sinful. And in the first sense, (which I have told you is not meant,) ordinarily, the Gospel cannot be said to be hid in a sinful sense. Those that live in the remotest parts and quarters of the world, it is not their sin that they have not the Gospel, while there was no means or opportunities of their ever having it; nor will it be charged upon them, where there was a simple impossibility of coming by that knowledge, which the Gospel contains, or is the means of; it will never be imputed as their sin, that they had it not. As it is said in reference to the law, (and indeed by the law there is meant the whole revelation of the mind and will of God,) "They that sin without the law, shall be judged without the law; and so, they that have sinned without the Gospel, shall be judged without the Gospel; they that have sinned with the law, shall be judged by the law; and they that have sinned against the Gospel, shall be judged by the Gospel." Law is there taken in that sense, for that revelation of the mind of God, which is superadded to natural light; "They that have sinned without this, shall be judged without this; and they that have sinned under it or against it, shall be judged by it." There will be no excuse to them from punishment, if they have violated and resisted that law and light which they had; if they go about to excuse themselves, any of them that way, I had not an express written law; when you sinned without law, you shall suffer without law. It will be but a like case with that of the soldier's excuse to the commander, Pericles, the Athenian general, when he charged him with a fault, and asked him how he came to do it, *Invitus feci, invitus ergo pœnas dabis.* "I did it unwillingly," and you shall, therefore, suffer unwillingly.

But the great iniquity is, or then is the Gospel hid in a sinful sense, when men have it among them, or may have it, and will not hear it; or do hear it, and never understand it; that is, never apply or set themselves to understand it; or receive no conviction from it, or receive no suitable impression on their hearts from it. Thus, all the while, is the Gospel hid to him by their own iniquity, that they do voluntarily make resisting efforts against it, as every thing of sin must have somewhat of *voluntarium* in it; it supposeth, that otherwise, a brute agent might be as capable of sin as a rational one, and that cannot be. But here lies the iniquity, that men might understand, and they will not; might consider and be convinced, and they will not; and there is a natural faculty that should turn them, even in their very hearts, but there is a sinful disinclination, and they will not turn: for it is the will that is not turned; "You will not come to me that you might have life." And so, when the Gospel is hid, it is hid, not because men cannot see, but because they will not; they do (as it were) pretend the veil; stretch forth the veil before their eyes, or bind it close over their own eyes, hoodwink themselves that they will not see.

As the case is stated by the apostle: "Alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them; and because of the blindness of their hearts, through the ignorance that is in them," Ephes. iv. 18. But what kind of ignorance is that? See how it is paraphrased,—it is a blindness of heart,—it is a blindness, because they will not see, a voluntary affected blindness: and this makes the biddenness of the Gospel to be so in a sinful sense, for here is *voluntarium* in the case; the same thing that we find spoken in reference to natural light in the pagan world; that is, that there was that which might be known of God among them, it was manifest in them, for God had revealed it to them, or among them, as the particle here used may signify: but they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, Rom. i. 20—28. As it there follows; That knowledge was ungrateful to them, and an unwelcome thing to them; and, therefore, they fence against it, and exclude it from among them, what they can, as a man would keep off fire from his bosom; such was the light of God which shone to them; "Light shineth in darkness, but the darkness will not comprehend it," John iii. 19. The minds of men do fortify themselves against this light, as much as in them is: so in reference to Gospel light too, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world," John iii. 19. Here was supervening light, accessary light, come into the world; "but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." And so the Gospel is a hidden thing to them, because they do exclude it, even to the very uttermost; stop it where they can stop it, either by not understanding it, or not considering it, or by not admitting conviction about it, or by not obeying from the heart. And then,

2. Being thus far sinfully hidden, it comes also to be penally hidden by a *nemesis*, hidden by a just *vindicta;* ye will not understand, then ye shall not understand; you will harden your hearts against light, against grace, and against the design of the Gospel, and they shall be hardened; that is, God doth only say, "I will let you have your own design;" he doth harden, *non pertirudo Malikham, sed non impertiendo gratiam;* as Austin's apt speech was of old, to that sense; you do make it your business to harden your hearts, and fence and fortify them against the light and grace of the Gospel; and since you will have it so, so let it be. So long (it may be) a contest hath been driven on with such souls; but at last, God sees fit to recede, to retire, to give off; now you have conquered, enjoy your victory; these are victories, that undo men, that tend to their ruin. We are never to suppose, that the doom passeth before the desert, such a doom as that especially; "Let them that be filthy be filthy still; they that are unjust be unjust still," Rev. xxii. "And when I would have purged you, and you would not be purged, your iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die," Ezekiel. But when that hath been persisted in long and highly, as the case was, in reference to the old world, it comes to this at last, "My Spirit shall not always strive with men," Gen. vi. 3. God did contend long, even by his Spirit, against the wickedness of an apostate world, till at length, a deluge and flood comes; and a little before that, the determination goes forth, "My Spirit shall no longer strive with man;" I see men are intent upon perishing, they will be lost, let them be lost; I have been striving with them so long, and they will have that course that ends in perishing; my Spirit shall give them obstruction in their way no longer. And this was the determination, at length, in reference to that people of the Jews, that peculiar people that he singled out from the rest of the world; he bore their manners long, he contended with them long, while they always resisted the Holy Ghost; (as Stephen tells them;) "As your fathers did, so do ye," Acts vii. 51. Implying this to be, with that people, an entailed war upon their posterity, with the Spirit of God; you do but keep up a war against the Divine Spirit from age to age, as your fathers did before you; "They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, till he turns and fights against them, and becomes their enemy," Isaiah lxiii. 9. But what did things come to in this contest, between the Spirit of God, and the fathers of this people, to whom Stephen speaks? Why, in reference to them, it comes at last to that terrible doom, which we have in the 6th chapter of Isaiah, and 10th verse. All that goes before in that chapter, is nothing else but a terrible preparation for that awful solemnity, of pronouncing this doom. Here is a glorious appearance of the great God in the temple, in the very year of King Uzziah's death, of which you may read in the known story; "I saw" (saith the prophet) "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple; above it stood the seraphims, each of them had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." One of these seraphims crying to another, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory." Here is a most magnificent, splendid, and glorious appearance; and what was it for? What was the design of it? The prophet is called forth, he is astonished at the sight, and cries out, "Wo is me, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Well, he is fortified, being almost sunk in his spirits upon the terrible majestic glory of this appearance. One of the seraphims flies to him, with a live coal in his hand, lays it on his

mouth, toucheth his lips, tells him his iniquity is purged away. Well, what is after all this? Now, saith God, "Thou art thus prepared, I have a message for thee to go upon." And what is that? Why, saith he, "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and their ear heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted and be healed." This is the design of this glorious appearance, and this solemn message, after this august manner; a thing, that might even shake the foundation of heaven and earth, to have the case represented and in view, as really it was; and you find that this very thing, this passage in this chapter, it is with the greatest awfulness imaginable reiterated again and again in the New Testament; several times by our Saviour, and at length by the apostle Paul, when finally testifying at Rome against that more perverse infidelity of this people, than ever he met with among pagans; as indeed, it was always observable of them, they were more high, and haughty, and peremptory, and malicious, in their unbelief. Some, indeed, (when the apostle had convened them together at his dwelling-house in Rome,) believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not. "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed," Acts xxviii. 25, 26, 27. After the apostle had spoken our word; and it is this terrible word repeated and recollected; "Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Isaiah the prophet, to our fathers; Go unto this people, and say, Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not; for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and they should be converted, and I should heal them." This the matter may come to, conversion and healing; and I am speaking to you, to represent it to you, that it may come to this, on purpose to prevent (if God will) the other ever doing so; and if it be considered seriously, and taken to heart, as the importance of such a case doth require; it will never come to this sad issue among you. If there be none of you that do bend your minds, and fortify your consciences, and obdure your own hearts against the truth, and against the grace, and against the Gospel of our Lord, things will have a better issue with you; they shall issue in things "that accompany salvation, though I thus speak," Heb. vi. 9.

SERMON IX.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

We have shown (and the matter is in itself plain) how these words relate to those that go before; that, in as much as it is the design of the faithful ministers of Christ, in the course of their ministry, to commend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God; and that the great things that they deal with men about, are therefore supposed to be such as do carry in them a self-recommending evidence to men's consciences, as you have heard they do; that in this state of the case, things being thus, if yet the Gospel do remain a hidden Gospel, those to whom it is so, must be lost souls; and that is it, which is with us the ground of discourse from these words, to wit,

Doctrine. That the Gospel being hid to them, who continually live under it, is a very sad token of their being lost; it was propounded, in speaking of this, to open to you,

1. In what sense the Gospel may be said, and is here meant, to be hid.
2. To show what this being lost must mean.
3. What connexion there is between these two,—The Gospel being hid to any, and their being lost. And then the use will ensue.

The first we have showed already, what is meant hereby, the Gospel's being hid. We are now next to show you,

2. What this being lost doth signify. In general, it is not an external or temporal ruin that is here spoken of, but a spiritual and eternal one: it is the soul's being lost, and lost for ever, which is manifestly the thing here meant; that being lost, which doth certainly ensue upon blindness of mind, infidelity, and exclusion of the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, as the following words show; and which, therefore, shows that it must be a spiritually eternal ruin that is here meant. But that being the meaning in the general, we must know that men may be lost two ways; that is, either actually, as it is with them who are already in hell, on whom the infernal pit hath already shut its mouth; or else as they are liable and tending to such a ruin. And it must be in this latter sense that they are spoken of as lost here, to whom the Gospel is a hidden Gospel. It is spoken for the warning of survivors, and to make such look about them that do as yet live fruitless lives, and are unimpressed under the Gospel, which in the name of the eternal God is from time to time preached to them. And nothing is more ordinary, either in Scripture or in common speech, than to speak of men as lost who are in visible tendency unto destruction, though they are not yet actually destroyed. Now for this liableness to be lost, or this tendency to destruction that is here manifestly meant, and in respect whereof those here spoken of may be said to be lost; that may again be two-fold; that is, either it may be such a liableness to destruction as is common to the apostate children of men as such: or else that liableness to destruction which is special with some more than others, or as having somewhat peculiar in it which renders their case worse than the common case. In the former sense all the apostate world is spoken of as lost; all the apostate world that remains yet unreconciled, unconverted; "The Son of man came to seek and save that which is lost," Matthew xviii. 11. Every unconverted sinner is in this sense a lost creature. And so indeed they may be said to be all lost; (Luke xix. 10.) the whole apostate world yet continuing in their apostacy upon a double account, 1st, In wickedness; and 2nd, Under wrath.

1st, In wickedness. So all unconverted sinners are lost creatures, lost in sin; nothing is indeed more ordinary than to speak of a wicked person (even as he is such) under the notion of a lost person. Even among pagans themselves, of a very wicked man, a debauched person, they say he is a *perdite nequam*, and that he is a man *perdidissimus moribus*; a flagitious person is a lost person, and the word that is commonly used in the Greek in profane authors (as you have it used again and again in Scripture too, *Asotos* and *Asotia*) signifies one that is lost, or one that is unsaved, or cannot be saved. So all the ungodly world is lost in sin and wickedness; which sin is death, began, being in its prevailing power over them, they, being under the dominion of it, are dead. "To be carnally minded is death," that is, to be under the dominion of a carnal mind is death; he is a dead man, he is a lost man, that is under the dominion of a mind habitually carnal, not capable of savouring divine things, the things of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 5, 6. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1. who were dead, lost in death. Death hath a present and actual dominion over all this apostate and unreconciled world; reigns over it in conjunction with sin. That is not to be understood barely of liableness to natural death, that is a low diminishing sense of that reign of death spoken of Rom. v. The restitution of that life is meant which was lost in Adam's transgression, by which not only did men become not only mortal but sinful; not only mortal as to their bodies, but sinful (and so under death) as to their souls; which was also the plain meaning of their being all dead: "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if Christ died for all, then we were all dead," 2 Cor. v. 14. A universal death stretching its wings over all this world, and covering it with a deadly shade every where; and all were alienated from the life of God, destitute and forsaken of the Divine, the vital presence; God departed and with-

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drawn and gone, as he is from this apostate world yet unreconciled: and so are all said to be lost in wickedness, *perdite nequam*, as the common phrase is.

2dly, All were lost in wrath too, or under wrath; "The wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," Rom. i. 17. who hold the truth in unrighteousness, as men universally do. And so, in this double respect, men being generally said to be lost; lost in sin, and lost under Divine wrath; the phrase of their being lost is so applicable to them as the like phrase would be to any man in this case, supposing these two things to concur in the particular case of any man; 1st, That he is a person dreadfully diseased, that some mortal disease is upon him that is likely to be the end of him very soon; and 2nd, That he is an offending criminal besides, that he hath fallen under the sentence of the law that condemns him to die. When these things concur in any particular person's case, that is, he is a most dangerously diseased person, hath a mortal disease upon him, and that he is under a sentence and doom to die at the same time; who would not say the man were lost? It is a great question whether his disease or the halter will despatch him soonest. But he is lost the one way or the other: so it is with the apostate world; they are lost in sin; this is their disease which carries death in it. "To be carnally minded is death;" these men carry their own death about them wherever they go: and then they are under a doom besides; that is, all the impenitent unbelieving world lie under a doom, under a sentence. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Rom. viii. 1. What doth this imply, but that there is condemnation to all the rest, only those are excepted from condemnation who are in Christ, walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit? all the rest then are condemned men, dead men, all lost? This is one notion wherein those not actually destroyed, or on whom the infernal pit hath not already shut its mouth, may yet be said to be lost, as being liable to be lost, and as in a visible manifest tendency to destruction, that being continually impendent and approaching. But then,

Besides this common case wherein men may be thus said to be lost, there is somewhat special in the case of some that renders their case far worse than the common case; so as that if all may (in the fore-mentioned respects, till redeeming mercy have taken place in reference to them) be said to be lost, they much more, as having somewhat in their case much more dismal, much more frightful, than is or can be in the common case of unreconciled sinners merely as such. You would think the case to be very dismal of Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by vindictive flames that caught hold of them from heaven; hell rained down upon them (as it were) out of heaven, fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest. Yet our Lord tells us of some whose case was much more dismal than that of Sodom and Gomorrah; some that were under his own preaching, under his own ministry, from day to day he was preaching grace and life among them in that Gospel which was designed the savour of life unto souls. Many that heard it were surprised and admired, "wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth," Luke iv. And yet even among these, there were some whose case was worse by far, and more dreadful, than that of Sodom and Gomorrah; and it is easy to apprehend in general wherein. I shall not descend to particulars now, but reserve that to a further place afterwards in our discourse. It is very evident that among those that are lost in the sense and intendment that hath been mentioned; that is, as being liable to perish, and whose destruction is approaching and impending; among these some are yet, though lost, recoverably lost, others are irrecoverably, of the common case of the apostate world as such; though it be said of them they are all lost, yet they are recoverably lost; that is, if you consider no more than the common case as such; for there are proper apt means appointed for recovery and salvation which may probably have their effect upon them, their blessed effect, to recover and save them. And though there be degrees, very different degrees of danger, some may be more in danger, some are less so; yet the case admits of very vast difference when the Gospel first comes among a people, and when it hath long continued among them.

(1.) When it first comes among them, here are the proper apt means set on foot for the saving that which was lost: the Redeemer approacheth them, makes his first trial upon them: Have you a mind to be saved, have you a mind to accept of a Saviour, of a Redeemer, to put yourselves under his shelter, and under his government, which you must do at the same time? Here are hopeful appearances in these men's cases. It is true the Redeemer comes to them as a company of lost creatures; but he comes on purpose to propose to them the certain means and methods of their being saved. And you that now have a mind to fall in with the Redeemer, you may have him; you must then take him to be yours, and give up yourselves to be his: and if this agreement on your part be cordial and vital, and you are in good earnest in it, you are safe in the midst of danger; yea, though you live in surrounding deaths that do ingulf and are ready to swallow up, and are sure to swallow up all that do not so. But consider here,

(2.) That a people among whom the Gospel hath long continued, and it may be with happy success as to many, many have been gathered in; but there are also such as yet stand out: they have heard the words of grace sounding in their ears often, which have sounded to them like a tale that is told. All that hath been said to them of the Son of God's having come down into this world to die a reconciling sacrifice for lost sinners, that he might bring about union and peace and friendship between the offended Majesty of heaven and them, hath made no more impression on them than so many breaths of air would do upon a rock. Sure the case is far worse with these men than the common case of sinners, as such, can be supposed to be. There may be even of these yet some whose case is not altogether desperate; we do not know what wonders the power of grace may yet work, but there may be among these some also that are lost irrecoverably, upon whom an irrevocable doom is past; so as that repentance is hid on both sides, both from God's eye and theirs; they will never repent, and he will never repent: they have a heart that can never repent, and God hath passed his doom that he will never repent. And now, as touching this case, that such a case there is, plain scriptures put us out of all doubt; some that are never to be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come. I need not tell you for what crime. "All sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men, excepting that one, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall never be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come." Matt. xii. 31. But I say as to their case, who may be thus said to be irrecoverably lost, while they are yet on this side hell, whether it may be known to others, or even to themselves that they are so lost, I shall say nothing now; I have spoken my mind to that very publicly another way in that book called "The Redeemer's Tears;" and may say somewhat more to it in the use, before I pass from this subject. But that there are some (I say) so irrecoverably lost, while they as yet are under the Gospel, is out of all doubt; whether they can know it or others know it, which is less to be supposed, I shall say no more now. But concerning them, of whom this is not to be said of them, that they are irrecoverably lost, though their case be much worse than the common case: yet there may be degrees in it of greater and less probability of their yet being wrought upon to their recovery and salvation. And that we shall come to and consider by and by, when we speak of the connexion between these two, the Gospel's being hid, and their being lost.

But as to the import and meaning of the phrase here, it is plain it doth chiefly refer to the latter sort of men, that is, that are lost in a worse sense than the common case doth amount to. It is not to be supposed that men's being lost in the common sense, can be the thing here intended in this Scripture, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:" why, all are lost! it must therefore be meant in a peculiar sense. It is evident then he doth not speak here of men's being lost in that sense wherein all are lost by nature; but he speaks of them that live under the Gospel and are not yet recovered and saved by it, whether these may be said to be recoverably or irrecoverably lost, yea

or no; whether it be the one or the other of them, the thing is sad; and because the determination is so very distinct, how to bring a determining line between those that are, under the Gospel, lost irrecoverably, and them that are lost recoverably; and since we cannot tell among all, those who belong to the one rank, and who belong to the other rank, and it may be no one person can tell concerning himself, that he doth most certainly belong to that more horrid view of such as are lost irrecoverably; therefore we shall only take the matter indefinitely concerning those that are lost, in a worse sense than men in general can be said to be. And so we pass on in the next place,

3. To show the connexion between these two, the Gospel being hid and such men being lost; for I told you in the doctrine that the Gospel being hid unto such, is a sad token of their being lost, that I may state this connexion to you; you may in the general take this for a ground, that those are to be reckoned the significant tokens that do belong to the thing they betoken, either as causes or effects of it; or whatsoever things are connected with one another as cause and effect, the one of these doth significantly betoken the other. Now that connexion which there is between these two, the Gospel's being hid, and the soul's being lost, is a connexion of cause and effect. And this connexion may be mutual and interchangeable; that is, something of the Gospel's being hid, may be the cause of the soul's being lost; and again, the soul's being lost may be the cause of the Gospel's being hid. And so they may change places; they may be alternate, as it were, in the matter; they may be mutual causes and effects to one another. We shall consider,

1. The connexion between these two the former way, that is, the Gospel's being hid being the cause why they are lost. And if it be hid it must needs endanger their being lost by a casual contribution that it hath thereunto, whether we can say they are recoverably lost or irrecoverably; the Gospel's being hid to them is a cause of it, a manifest cause of it; if they are at last lost, into this it most manifestly results, the Gospel was hid from them. If it be always hid they are surely lost; if it be so hid that at length the veil be done away, it will appear, that though they were lost they were not remedilessly lost, but upon a two-fold account the Gospel's being hid must be the cause of the soul's being lost. 1st, As the Gospel's being hid doth include in it the want of somewhat that's necessary to salvation; and, 2ndly, As the Gospel's being hid doth include somewhat in it that promotes their destruction. These two ways the Gospel's being hid is the cause of their soul's being lost.

1. As it carries in it the want of somewhat that was necessary to salvation is the Gospel hid to them, then they must want that without which they cannot be saved so long as the Gospel is hid to them. The knowledge and belief of Gospel truths, the acceptance of Gospel offers, and subjection to Gospel commands, are things without which they cannot be saved. But while the Gospel is hid to them, these things must be wanting: they must want the saving knowledge of Gospel truths; they must want true acceptance of Gospel grace and offers; they must want entire and sincere obedience to Gospel commands; and without these they will be lost: these they can never attain to while the Gospel remains hid; while it is a hidden Gospel all things contained in it may be represented to them, but they are all so many parables, they understand nothing of the meaning of them; all that is said to them is only as a story told to a man asleep, or between sleeping and waking, and whereof there is no more perfect sense begot in their minds than there is of any thing that you mutter to the ear of a man asleep. They cannot believe what they do not understand, and they cannot accept those offers that depend upon truths which they do not believe; and they can never yield obedience to those commands which stand in conjunction with such offers, and their obedience and subjection thereunto must be in equal connexion with their acceptance of those offers. I cannot take Christ to be my Saviour, but I must take him to be my Lord at the same time; and he that takes him to be his Lord, doth it without despair; but with hope that he shall be entertained by him, and treated by him as a Saviour. But nothing of this can be where the Gospel is hid, and while it remains still a hidden Gospel. So all this, while these souls do yet continue lost souls, even for this very cause, for this as the cause, that the Gospel being a hidden Gospel doth imply the want of things necessary to salvation. But also,

2. The Gospel's being a hidden gospel doth imply also that which manifestly tends to promote their destruction. And under that head two things do come to be considered, indisposition on their part, and provocation on God's part; and both these growing so much the more, by how much the longer they continue void of impression under the Gospel.

(1.) An indisposition on their part to all the duty they are to do, and to all the advantages they are to use and enjoy in order to their salvation; they grow more and more indisposed the longer they live under the Gospel as a hidden Gospel. It is necessary, in order to their salvation, that they should exercise "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." But they grow more and more indisposed to these, by how much the longer they continue under the Gospel as a hidden Gospel to them; and that in several respects.

1. The great things contained in the Gospel that should influence them hereunto, they grow from time to time less and less considerable to them: what should have influence to the turning of a soul through Christ to bring him to exercise "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," grows from time to time less considerable. These mighty, weighty motives are contained in the Gospel. Sinner, if thou dost not turn thou diest! If thou dost not fall into a closure with the Son of God as thy Redeemer, Saviour, and Lord, thou art a ruined creature to all eternity. Lo, here is a glorious heaven before thee, that will be the reward of thy Gospel obedience. Here is a place and state of torment, a fiery gulf, a flaming hell before thee, and in view too, that must determine thy place, and the state of thy eternal torment and punishment, if thou turn not, if thou do not obey the Gospel, if thou becomest not a serious, penitent and sincere believer, a faithful dutiful subject to God in Christ. Here are the great considerations which the Gospel presents men with, to influence their turning, their renovation and conversion to God through Christ. Now the longer men continue under the Gospel, while it yet continues a hidden Gospel to them, the less do these considerations signify with them from day to day; because the force of them hath been spent upon them (as it were) heretofore, and now they signify little, still less and less. Such considerations as these, though they are the weightiest and most important that can be imagined, yet they have been blown upon; and, saith the obdurate sinner, I have learned long ago to make light of these things; and, what? do you tell me of these things now? These are the greatest things that can be told them, or mentioned to them. But these things they have learned long ago to make very little of, so as they can say, in case you talk of heaven to me now, pray what doth it signify more now than it did ten or twenty years ago? Is heaven grown a better thing than it was seven or ten years ago? and I made light of it then. And is hell grown a more terrible thing now than it was seven or ten years ago? and I made light of it then; and, pray, why cannot I as well do so now? These considerations, which should have the mightiest power upon the spirits of men, may still signify less and less, when they continue long under the Gospel, while it remains still a hidden Gospel to them; for these are blown upon, and men have taught themselves to make light of them, and to have them signify little or nothing to them:—if you cannot speak to me of somewhat greater than heaven and hell, eternal blessedness and eternal misery, you move not me, for these things I have heard and made light of long ago. And,

2. The longer the Gospel is hid, the minds of men grow the blinder; as if there be no ability to face the sun without prejudice, the longer you face it the more your prejudice will be. There is a way of beholding that glorious light which shines in the Gospel without prejudice, and with the greatest advantage, its beams being refracted as they are allayed by grace; and so it is not an amazing astonishing glory, but a cheering, reviving, heart-exhilarating glory, that shines through the glass of the Gospel

dispensation. But if the Gospel be so hid from men that it cannot be thus looked upon, then their minds grow blinder and blinder. The sun hath put out their eyes, as the God of this world is said to do in the very next verse. It is a very dreadful thing to be struck blind with Gospel light; but that is the case with many,—Gospel light strikes them blind, and their minds grow less and less receptive, the longer they remain under this Gospel without effect, without receiving the proper impressions of it. The proper impression of it would contemper the eye to the object, the visible power to that glory that clothes the object; but while nothing of this is done, the longer the light of the Gospel shines, the less perspicuity there is in the eye of their minds, it is less perceptive, less capable of taking it in. And,

3. Conscience is grown weaker; and so they are more indisposed to all the duties, and the use of the advantages that are requisite to their salvation. Conscience, it grows weaker, and is more debilitated for the doing its proper office. The context shows us plainly how the state of this case must be understood; that is, that in the ministration of this Gospel, they, whose work it is, do apply themselves to the very consciences of men in the sight of God; and that truth which they preach carries in it (as you have heard) a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. Hereupon there is a close grappling between such truth and conscience; for they do apply themselves in the sight of God, in preaching such truths to the consciences of men, that they do, and that they must do; truth then is insinuating, and gets within; as it must be supposed to do when it is held in unrighteousness. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, (Rom. i. 18.) who hold the truth in unrighteousness." They that hold the truth in unrighteousness do hold it; it is got within them. Then, I say, there is a close and immediate grapple and tug between truth let in, truth intermitted, and conscience; but they have got the victory. Truth, so far as conscience receives it in, is engaged against corrupt inclinations, against vicious appetites, against the carnal heart that is averse and disaffected to God. Here lies the grapple between truth in the conscience, and the power of corrupt inclination in the heart. Well, vicious inclination hath got the victory; every such victory makes the next easier; every former victory makes way for a following one, with so much the greater facility; and conscience having been baffled once by the power of corrupt and carnal inclination, can the more easily be baffled again. As you know, if there be two combatants engaged with one another in a very close tug and grapple, he that is conquered and receives the foil hath spent a great deal of his strength, and is grown weaker, and so is the more easily thrown again if there succeed another grapple. So it is in this case, when men have once brought conscience to yield, when they have succeeded so far in the design of mortifying conscience, further conquest is the more easy; for (as it hath been heretofore told you upon some occasion) when these two are engaged against one another, carnal inclination in the heart, and light in the mind, or conscience, they being opposite one to another, and mutually engaged one against another, the one must die; either conscience must be mortified, or corrupt inclination must be mortified. And whereas, the design, intendment, and tendency of Gospel truth is to enforce a mortification of corrupt inclination, but the Gospel is hid and doth not prevail in order thereunto, then the other part is doomed to death. There can be no consent, no yielding to it, that corrupt inclination should die: then that of course must be yielded to, let conscience die; if there must be a mortification, let it be upon conscience, and not upon appetite, not upon corrupt inclination, let that live, and let conscience die. And so much now is done towards the killing and mortifying of it; and so it grows weaker and weaker still, by how much the more the resistance to a Gospel yet hid hath been continued and kept on foot. And so the indisposition grows more and more, the longer the Gospel is hid; and so there is so much the more likelihood to be a being finally lost. That such will be finally lost, are in the way and tending to it apace, in the concurrence of such things as do now meet in their case; as we would say of a vessel in a storm, and as was said of that wherein the apostle Paul was, all hope that they should be saved was taken away, Acts xxvii. 20. No hope left of being saved. You may suppose such a concurrence in such a case, that there shall appear very little hope; here are so violent storms upon the soul that hath abandoned and surrendered itself, against conscience, to the government of lust and corrupt inclination.

And here is the Spirit of God gone; as we shall have occasion to show more hereafter. And here is the devil let loose upon a man. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded their eyes." Any one that looks upon this endangered vessel would say the ship were lost, it doth not obey the helm; for so the man doth not whose conscience hath no power over him, doth not govern him; she doth not answer the helm; she falls from the helm; she is lost, would we say of such a vessel. The storm is violent upon it; corrupt inclination grows stronger; God is gone, and the devil hath seized it, and taken possession, and is putting out the eyes of the poor creature as fast as he can. The man is visibly lost. We do not know what miracles God may work; we know not what he may do, but in all appearances the man is lost.

There are other things to be said concerning the growing indisposition upon such a soul, as to the things that are necessary to its being saved; and many things that will show the provocation grows on God's part while this indisposition is growing on man's part. And, take all together, and it seems a very hopeless case, if it be not altogether desperate. Truly there is very little hope left in such a case, that they should be saved at length to whom the Gospel doth thus remain hid.

SERMON X.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

I HAVE already opened unto you what is meant by the Gospel being hid, and what is meant by their being lost to whom it is so; and shown you in what peculiar sense both those must be taken, different from what is the common case of the apostate unconverted world; that both here must be understood to superadd somewhat to that common case, wherein men as sinners in the state of apostacy, in the most general sense have the Gospel hid to them, and are themselves in a lost state.

We have from hence gone on to show you the connexion between these two, the Gospel's being hid and their being lost; and you have heard the one of these may be spoken of as betokening the other, and so they are manifestly put together here; and that these tokens are most significant when the token and the thing betokened have the relation of cause and effect one to another; that these two may be understood to have that mutual and reciprocal relation to one another.

That is, that the Gospel being hid may be the cause that such are lost to whom it is so hid, and their being lost the effect; and back again, that their being lost may be the cause, and the Gospel's being hid the effect; and accordingly, with some difference may this context be understood, according to that two-fold sense, or reference, that one of these may have to the other. Take the former reference or habitude of these to the other, and the sense will run thus; that is, that since the great things of the Gospel, about which we apply ourselves to the very consciences of men in the sight of God, are so very plain, and do carry so clear and convictive light with them, as they do, if yet the Gospel shall remain hid to such as are thus dealt with from time to time, their minds will grow, in all likelihood, more and more indisposed to comport with the design of it; God will grow more and more displeased, his displeasure will rise higher and higher; their guilt will grow greater and greater, and they will be more visibly in

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danger of being finally lost; or, according to the latter reference, the sense will be thus, that the great things of the Gospel are of such evidence, and of such manifest importance, that the consciences of men being applied to, and dealt with from time to time about them, it is hardly conceivable such things can be hid to such persons unless they be lost. The matter is otherwise unaccountable, why such things should not take hold of men; surely they are lost that such things will not fasten upon them. You know, according to the former reference, as being hid is the cause, being lost is the effect; this we have spoken already, and showed you that the Gospel being hid must be the cause of their being lost to whom it is so; both as its being hid doth exclude what is necessary to their salvation, and as it doth include what contributes to their destruction.

And now we go on to the other reference that the one of these hath to the other; that is, as being lost may be the cause, and the Gospel's being hid may be the effect: and it is exceeding agreeable to the design of this context to understand the matter so. We do, saith he, in this ministry of our's commend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God. This is plain; and this is our constant course. And what? is it a supposable thing, that our Gospel should be hid to them while we do so? How can it be? It can be upon no other account but that they are lost; it must needs argue and suppose them a lost sort of men, upon whom a Gospel, so applying itself to conscience, doth not fasten, takes no hold.

But then, (will you say,) How must being lost be understood? I have told you already how it must be understood in this place; you are sure it cannot be that they are eventually lost, or already in hell; it cannot be understood so; and it cannot be understood that they are lost in that sense that is common to the apostate world, in respect whereof the Son of man is said to have come to seek and "save that which was lost." But there are two things besides that it may and must mean in this case.

1. That they are sinfully lost; they are lost in sin; they are lost in carnality, and that in a deeper degree than is common to the rest of the world. There is a greater and more confirmed dominion of sin in them, in their several faculties and powers, than in the generality of the unconverted world, as such; greater, deeper, blacker darkness upon their minds; the god of this world (as it follows in the next verse) hath put out their eyes, hath blinded them, so as they have less light, less eye-sight than before they had, (so it must be understood,) or than men commonly have, otherwise there were no peculiar reason in the case why this should be said of them. But we find it said. If it were to be understood that the god of this world hath no otherwise blinded them than he hath blinded the unconverted world, why should it be said that they are lost more than all others upon that account? That would argue and be a reason that all are lost alike, if all were blind alike. But he hath "blinded the minds of them that believe not;" he hath been dealing with them all the while they have been otherwise dealt with by another hand, to be brought to faith; he hath been endeavouring to confirm them in their unbelief, and hath made their minds more blind than ever they were; and they are at a remoter distance from believing than ever, as that fascination by which he hath possessed their minds, hath more and more taken hold of them. And it must be understood that they are lost more in heart-sins; disaffection to the holy designs of the Gospel, enmity against God and against Christ hath prevailed to a greater height in them, and so they are lost, lost in sin. And,

2. They must be understood hereupon to be lost under deeper guilt and a heavier doom, that is from God, penally upon them; so that he hath been even provoked to "swear against them, in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest;" as in that Heb. iii. 11. quoted from the 95th Psalm, that was sworn against them that believed not; as it was here in this context said, the minds were blinded of them that believed not.

But this (you may say) is very severe. And truly it is so. But how can we help it? We cannot by our thought, this way or that, alter the nature of things. They will lie as they do; but we may, by a due use of our thoughts, and according to that light which the Holy Scriptures afford us, come to understand things more to advantage. And some things I shall offer to you that may tend partly to justify, and partly to mollify, this severity. It is indeed very severe, that men under the Gospel should arrive to that state, to that pitch, to be so far lost, as that to suppose them now to continue never so long under it, they shall never be the better for it. Let the plainest things that can be thought or spoken be said to them, they shall be always hid to them, because they are lost. A fearful thing! But do but consider a little what I shall offer to you, which may have that double tendency, that I spoke of, partly to justify this severity, and partly to mollify it. As,

1. Consider this, that those that are thus lost, hereupon is likely to be still a hidden Gospel to them, let them hear it never so long, they are like to be never the better for it. I say, consider, that if any are thus lost, they were not always so lost. This is a thing that is come upon them, and which they have drawn upon themselves. It must be understood with reference to a former day which they have had, wherein the matter was otherwise, wherein they lay not under that dreadful stupefaction, and that heavy doom which now will come upon them. They had their day; those had so in that 95th Psalm, who are given us for a sort of paradigm, they against whom God "sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest." He bare their manners in the wilderness forty years, as the expression is, in the 7th of Acts, of dying Stephen. There is time supposed to have been afforded to such under the Gospel, to whom the matter is come to this. They had their day; those that live within the compass of that light which revelation adds to the common light of natural reason, they have their more special day, and have always had so. There is a time, concerning which it is said to sinners, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts." He limits a certain day, a certain now; and this is a more critical now. There is a more peculiar crisis of time with such as live under the Gospel, than is with other men that have not that peculiar light which is afforded to the church of God in the world. God did, in a sort, connive at the nations of the earth that went every one in their own way, as it is said in the 17th of Acts, did overlook them, did not look upon them with so curious, so narrow, so inquisitive an eye; (as it were, speaking of God after the manner of men;) "but now (saith the apostle) he commandeth all men every where to repent." As that Roman consul, who, treating with Antiochus, (who made war upon some allies of the Roman state,) demanded of him in the name of the senate and commonwealth of Rome to withdraw his forces from molesting such a place. Saith the king, What time do you allow me to think of this, or consider it? He immediately draws, with a rod he had in his hand, a circle about the king, and tells him,—Now, before you stir out of this circle, declare whether you will be a friend to the senate and people of Rome, or an enemy:—so doth God circumscribe men, and set them limits. Now, out of hand, it may be in reference to some of us here in this assembly; the determination may be now, before you stir out of this place, Declare whether you will be reconciled, or persist in your enmity and unreconciled state. How many passages of scripture do speak to this sense! "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 5, 6. Now or never; now you have time for it; it may be, shortly you will have none, nor any ever after. It is a great thing which you find in that somewhat parallel text, (Luke xix. 42.) our Saviour beholds Jerusalem with weeping eyes, in his approach to it, being then upon the opposite hill, the mount of Olives, between which and that whereon Jerusalem stood there was a valley, in which ran the brook Kidron; when he was on the opposite hill, and on his descent of that, he having a convenient view of Jerusalem, as it lay before him, he weeps over it in such words as these, (mingled with tears,) "Oh! that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." Tears intermingle with and at length interrupt the words, and cause that

apotheosis, so as that the sentence was not filled up. "If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace." It is filled up with a more speaking silence, by a silence more emphatical than words could be,—"If thou hadst known;" we are only left to conceive what had been if they had known the things that belong to their peace in that their day; "but now they are hid from thine eyes!" Oh, how terribly emphatical is that now!—Now they are hid, a little while ago they were not hid; now they are. The curtain is drawn that creates (for ought we know) an eternal night; that curtain being drawn between the wretched soul and that glorious light that did shine upon it; "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. There is such a now, and there is another now; wherein this now is over, as in that 2 Cor. vi. 2. referred to that of the prophet Isaiah, xlix. 8.; supposing then, any to be thus lost, they were not always so lost; the case was in this respect sometimes otherwise with them. And then,

2. Supposing them thus lost, and the Gospel thereupon thus hid, permanently hid, this must refer to the former provocation; with many of them God was not well pleased, they who had that day in the wilderness, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. If our congregations be full of carcasses, if there be so many walking carcasses that fill our streets from day to day, God is not well pleased; if the Gospel be a lifeless Gospel, God is not well pleased, he is provoked. But, further,

3. The causes of that provocation are high and great, so that we have no reason to think it strange if the effects that ensue have very dreadful severity in them. Let me but instance to you, in some concurrences that do make the cause of such displeasure and provocation. As,

(1.) That when men let themselves thus be lost under the Gospel by their neglect of it, and their non-attendance to it; they are the greatest things imaginable which they did neglect, to which they refused their attendance, which they would not regard. When the Gospel did in the first age of it begin to shed its light upon the world, (though in that more wonderful manner the things were not more wonderful than now,) you hear in that, (Acts ii. 11.) that when that gift of tongues was so amazingly, by miracle, first conferred, all the people in that vast confluence at Jerusalem, at that time, from so many several countries, each one heard in his own tongue.—What did he hear?—"The wonderful things of God." The Gospel is not another Gospel from what it was then; it acquaints us with most wonderful things still. This was the aggravation upon Israel of old, upon Ephraim; "I have written unto them the great things of my law, and they have accounted them a strange thing," counted them strange to them, Hos. viii. 12. That might have been more commodiously expressed according to the significancy of the word there used, "were counted to them an alien thing," a foreign thing; a thing that concerned them not, which they had nothing to do with, which they looked upon as we used to look upon strangers, men that we never saw or knew before; we look upon them wistly: so they looked upon the wonderful things of the law of God, and so those do here upon the wonderful things of the Gospel; whereas they are great and wonderful, they should command a man's ears, and engage the attention of his mind to consider and take notice of them; they look upon them as strange things, as alien and foreign to them, and which they had nothing to do with. This is very provoking, when such things are brought to our notice, as "angels stoop down to look into." The descent of the glorious Son of God into the world, how did it amaze the glorious angels above! What is the meaning of this? say they. They look down after him. What is the intention of this strange descent? What is it for that the heir of heaven should go down into that lost, forlorn, wretched world? He that was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, is going down to visit that dark region of death. What means he there? What would he do there? Did they think he went down to die? Did they think he went down to be a man? Did they think he went down to offer himself a sacrifice upon a tree for the redemption and salvation of such? When so wonderful things as these are made known; and about these things (saith the apostle) we apply ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God; we appeal to their consciences about the rights of the Redeemer, and what duty, and what homage, must be owed to him from the redeemed. And, if our Gospel be hid you are lost; if you will not regard such a Gospel, though having in it so great things, you must be lost. And then,

(2.) These great things are set in the Gospel dispensation before men in the clearest light. They are not represented darkly and unintelligibly, and in parables; but the most important things, and those about which they are most of all dealt with, are the plainest things, that every one that runs may read. What? is there so much of mystery in "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," and in loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, and souls, and might, and our neighbour as ourselves? Is there so much of mystery in these, that men will not regard the greatest things, and clothed with the clearest light? What else doth that mean—We recommend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God? They are such things, as every conscience of man may be expected to admit conviction about out of hand, without more ado; then, sure, if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. It comes from hence that they are a lost sort of men, otherwise such things could not be hid from them. And,

(3.) They are things that men are dealt with about in the highest name; for, when we come to you, to deal with you about these things, we do not come upon our own errand; we do not come to you in our own name; but the ministers of this Gospel are ministers of Christ, and they come to you in the name of Christ; and he hath expressly said; "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that heareth me, heareth him that sent me." This same Gospel dispensation is the ministry of the Son of God, as the case is plainly stated before us in that 1st of Hebrews, beginning, "God, that spake many other ways in former times, hath now spoken to us by his Son;" and continues speaking to us by his Son; and (as he represents the case in the next chapter) "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him; God bearing them witness?" And afterwards, in the 12th chap. and 25th verse, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." This is said, when we are told that our Lord was at the right hand of God on the throne of the Majesty on high; as in the 3rd verse of that chapter, having given an account of our being under this ministry of the Son of God; though we are told, that "he, having purged our sins by himself, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" yet still we are under his dispensation, and still he is the great Speaker to us; so that now, when any suffer themselves to be thus lost under the Gospel, in their own sinful and chosen deceiving blindness and enmity against it, no wonder if it be determined that it shall be a hidden Gospel to them, and they lie long enough under the dispensation of it, and be never the better; for they have been affronting the Majesty of the son of God under the dispensation all this time. He that did seek and command greater attention, and greater reverence, and greater subjection of spirit, and upon higher right and title than when there was that terrible appearance upon mount Sinai, that shook the earth, and that seemed as if it would have put the creation into a paroxysm; there hath been a greater obligation to the deepest reverence and veneration upon them. And how just is the provocation when this Gospel is neglected, and men lose themselves under it, for him to say and determine this,—Well now, as to you it shall always be a hidden Gospel! And again,

(4.) There is this further in the case, that these great things in that great name, in that most excellent name, have been hinted, not once but often; and often inculcated and urged over and over again in the authority of the same name. What a mighty weight doth this add to the same load of guilt! and how much matter doth it supply to feed the indignation, to heighten the provocation, that such were applied to from time to time, in a continued

course, for many years together. "The earth, that drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: if there be fruit, a blessing comes upon it, and follows it; if there be no fruit, nothing but briers and thorns, then it is followed with a curse, and a dreadful curse,—"It is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 7, 8. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," Prov. xxix. 1. A fearful thing, when the gospel itself shall not be my remedy!—shall be destroyed without remedy; no remedy shall remedy your case. And,

(5.) We must suppose the Spirit to have often been at work in this time, and while such things were from time to time inculcated; so it was with the people of Israel; "you do always resist the Holy Ghost," Acts vii. He was then always striving, more or less, otherwise there could not always be a resistance. That is doing "despite to the Spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29. And herein is the greatest provocation, as I have told you heretofore, there is a remarkable accent in that expression, "the Spirit of grace." Oh, that Spirit of kindness, and grace, and sweetness, and benignity! to despite him, what an high provocation is this! When he comes and toucheth any of your minds, and makes some impression on your hearts, saith he, secretly and inwardly: "Sinner, wilt thou yet return? Hast thou yet no desire after God?—no inclination to know a Redeemer, and choose and close with him? Now to spite a Spirit of grace, when he speaks to you so kindly, and so sweetly, and so tenderly,—Oh sinner, do not go on, and perish for ever!—here is the very height of provocation. The word, in the original, signifies to injure inwardly the Spirit of grace, to make the injury enter into him, as it were; it imports to sting a man to the heart, to the very soul; as if it had been said, your injury pierceth into that Spirit of grace, that Spirit of love, kindness, and goodness; it enters into it. Thus it must be, when in such days, and at such times as these, the great things of the Gospel are heard with no effect. And,

(6.) It must be supposed, conscience was in some measure convinced at this time; for applications were made to it in the plainest cases. We have applied ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God, saith the apostle. And now if our Gospel be hid, it is that you are lost. And,

(7.) It must be supposed too that affections have been stirred in some measure and variously; there have been some desires enkindled, and some fears awakened, and some hopes and joys possibly raised, and some tastes, and relishes of the sweetness that is in this Gospel, and of the things contained therein; as it is supposed in that Heb. iv. 4, 5. after all this, to lose yourselves in darkness and wickedness; now if the Gospel be hid, there is no recovering such by repentance, as he there afterwards speaks. But,

(8.) This adds weight to all the rest, that they were very light matters for which men have exposed themselves to this fearful loss, even of themselves, of their very souls; a loss that nothing can recompense, nothing can make up. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. What hast thou had in exchange for thy soul? The smallest matters imaginable, the temporary satisfaction of a lust. I sold my soul (may one say) to please my friend. I sold my soul (may another say) for the love I had, for the lust I had, to a cup of drink. I sold my soul (may a third say) for the pleasure I took in a vain idle companion. These are the things that kept me from closing with God, uniting with my Redeemer, and from engaging and persisting in the way of life. O that God, and Christ, and heaven should be set so low! Thou didst break with me, (must the great God say, and must the Redeemer that died for you say,) thou didst break with me for a trifle, for a thing of nought; yea, thou didst prefer before me the vilest things, the most odious things. Thou didst rather choose to be a vassal, a slave to lust, than to live under the easy yoke and government of a compassionate and merciful Redeemer and Saviour. The deformities of wickedness were more amiable in thine eyes than the beauties of holiness. What can be said in this case, when the story comes to be told, and the matter is to be represented just as it is, that it is, thus as you have heard?

And that is the third thing to be considered in this case:—That as former provocation must have been supposed, so that provocation must have been very high and very great upon these sundry mentioned accounts. But then I add upon all this,

4. That if any hereupon be thus lost, (as you have heard,) it is only that God hath retired from them, withdrawn from them. He hath not positively hurt them; he never put any ill thoughts into them, or any ill disposition of mind. If it be severe in itself, and dreadful to you, that you are now a lost creature, God hath no hand in it, otherwise than as he retired from you: "Thy destruction is of thyself, but in him is thy help found," Hos. xiii. 9. He was ready to help thee, and to save thee, thou only destroyed thyself; he only withdrew that presence for which thou didst not care, that Spirit which thou didst vex and grieve; that is all: he never put any ill thought or inclination into thy mind and heart, thou destroyedst thyself; he did but say, These wretched creatures do not care for me, do not care for my Son, do not care for my Spirit; well, I will retire, I will let them alone, I will let them have their own way. He had said to you, "Turn ye at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you; I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded," Prov. i. Well, I behold your destruction now. It is not said, I will destroy you, but "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh;" and it will certainly come. God tempteth no man, neither is he tempted by any; but every man is "tempted when he is led away of his own lust and enticed," James i. 14. And then I would add, lastly,

5. That although all this be very certain, yet we cannot suppose the apostle here to be absolutely decisive in his judgment concerning the final states of particular persons; such may be more lost, and in a worse and more dreadful sense lost, than many others in the world, than the generality of the pagan world. But though they are so, it is not for all that determined that they are so lost as that they cannot be recovered. And we are sure they are not so lost as that they cannot be recovered, if they have not sinned that sin which cannot be pardoned; and which I do in the general believe that no man hath ever committed, or is guilty of, that is afraid he hath; indeed, your case is more dangerous than before, which should awaken you so much the more, because it is dangerous, and you are upon hazardous terms. They may be said to be lost, as being more out of the reach of the ordinary methods of grace, who yet are not absolutely lost, not sure to be finally lost. And no man hath reason to apprehend he is so lost, finally lost, irrecoverably lost, that comes once to be solicitous about it. No, if our God hath brought you to consider and bethink yourself; I am in danger to be lost, I know not what will become of me, or of my case at length, if I that have been such a stranger to God should continue much longer a stranger to him; if I that have neglected to capitulate with the Son of God should much longer neglect it; I know not what will become of this, it may be bitterness in the end. If you begin thus to consider, I hope the issue will prove thus, that it will be said of you as it was of the prodigal son, "This my son was dead and is alive, he was lost but is found." But more to this purpose, (as I have partly intimated already,) I shall speak in the use.

SERMON XI.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

THEY are lost souls to whom the Gospel is a hidden Gospel. This (you know) we have been upon from these

* Preached April 19th, 1691.

words; and we have in this showed you what is meant by the Gospel's being hid, and what is meant by the soul's being lost; and that both these are to be understood in a sense peculiar and different from the common case of men: and in what reference the Gospel's being hid, and their being lost, doth differ from the common case, we have particularly shown you: and have further shown the connexion between these things, the Gospel's being hid, and soul's being lost, to whom it is so; the one doth betoken the other, and they are the most significant tokens which have connexion with the thing betokened; as causes and effects, the one to the other. I have shown this is the case here: that the Gospel's being hid, it is a cause of the soul's being lost, both as it excludes what is necessary to their salvation, and as it includes what promotes their destruction. I have again showed you too, that being lost may also be the cause of the Gospel's being hid; and shown how being lost is to be taken in that case: lost in wickedness, as men more extremely wicked are said to be, and lost under a Divine doom. So they must be understood to be to whom the Gospel is therefore hid, men given up and forsaken of God, and then the God of this world blinds them.

And because this appears very severe, therefore I did by sundry considerations endeavour partly to justify, and partly to mollify, this severity; now I come to the use of this important truth. And it will be useful,

Use I. To inform us of sundry truths that by way of inference may be deduced here. As,

1. That it is no sufficient ground upon which any may conclude their state to be safe and good, that they live under the Gospel: I pray consider it. It is not enough hereupon to ground a conclusion concerning your good and safe final state, that you live under the Gospel. No, though you had apostolical preachers among you, for such these Corinthians had to whom this is with so much terror spoken. No, though you had angelical preachers, such as could speak to you, not with the tongues of men only, but of angels; for the Jews had that word before that was given to them as a Gospel; (as the apostle takes notice, Heb. iii.) unto them was the Gospel preached, as well as to us. And their Gospel was called the law, as that whole revelation went under the name of the law: "They that have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law." In those days when the law was the more conspicuous part of it, they had it "by the ministration of angels, but they kept it not," Acts vii. 53. Nay, though it were by the most divine preacher, our blessed Lord himself; "How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord himself?" (Heb. ii. 2.) even that Gospel was preached by the Son of God himself, and as it was, so was a hidden Gospel to many, and they lost souls under it. A man may perish as well under a hidden Gospel, as under no Gospel. And again,

2. We are to infer, That the proper design of the Gospel is the salvation of souls. If the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; if it were not hid they would not be lost, that is plainly implied: but that which hath no design or tendency to save would not save, whether hidden or not hidden. But there is no interveniency in this case to hinder a person's being saved by the Gospel, but only its being hid: therefore that which would save souls if not hid, must have an aptitude and designation to this purpose. Here is nothing to hinder a soul being saved by the Gospel if it be not hid; by this you learn therefore that the true and apt tendency and design of the Gospel is, to save souls. How often is it called by names that signify so much! "To you is the word of this salvation sent," Acts xiii. 22. "After you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation," Eph. i. 13. "How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which first began to be spoken?" Heb. ii. 3. What doth the words of this Gospel speak?—It speaks salvation. It is a great matter to know the Gospel by its true name, and to understand it accordingly: to think what God hath sent among you, when he hath sent his Gospel among you; and that which is its end and design, ought to be yours in attending it. The Gospel would make great and glorious work (I doubt not) among us, if it were more generally come to this, that the true end of the Gospel were our end, were convinced when we come to attend; how would it confound many a one if they were to give an account of their end in coming to attend, and wait on the ministry of the Gospel! I am going to such a place, such an assembly, such a church, such a meeting-house. Well, saith one, and what are you going for? I am going to hear what such a man can say: I am going to please my fancy and curiosity, to gratify my novel humour. God knows how few come to such assemblies with that temper of mind so as that they can truly say, being asked, He that knows all things, knows I go to look after the salvation of my own soul; it is a Gospel of salvation that I go to attend upon, and I go to attend upon it as such, on purpose that I may be saved, that I may in this way be working out my own salvation. But what an affront is it to the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth to pervert the design of this Gospel. What! Have men nothing to play with but sacred things; things that carry the stamp of the authority and majesty, as well as the grace and goodness, of heaven upon them? Have there nothing else to be trifled with but things of that sacred and awful import? No wonder if the Gospel be hid, and no wonder if souls be lost by multitudes at this rate. But again,

3. We may further learn, That while a man lives under the Gospel, the great question that depends concerning him is, Shall I be saved, or shall I be lost? Here is the great question that depends concerning every one, and which they ought to recount with themselves over and over again. Here is this case depending concerning me: shall I be finally saved or lost? Oh! what an awful thought is this, that every day that goes over my head, and every time I go to hear a sermon, still this question lies under consideration; shall I in the issue, or end of my course, be a saved or a lost man? Sure at this rate we should be working out our salvation with fear and trembling; nothing becomes us more, nothing is more suitable to the state of our case. And,

4. We further learn hence, That men may be lost on this side hell. If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that *are* lost; hid before they reach hell, whither no Gospel comes; and so lost before they reach thither. And then again,

5. By parity of reason, Men may be saved on this side heaven, as well as they may be lost on this side hell. We know the great Emmanuel was otherwise called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins. If this blessed word hath taken effect upon thy soul, it is saved; that is, it is so far saved now from sin, as that it governs now no longer. Its empire is broken, its throne is thrown down in the soul. Here is salvation on this side heaven: salvation is this day come to this house, to this soul, he is already a saved one. There is inchoate salvation; salvation begun that ascertains consummate salvation, and from which that will not be separated. The New Jerusalem, that glorious city that comes down out of heaven from God; Rev. xxi. 4. (supposing that be meant of a state of the church of God on earth;) the nations of them that are saved, walk in it. As soon as they enter into it, there they walk as saved ones. The nations of the saved, there they dwell, there they inhabit the city of God.

6. They to whom the Gospel is not hid are not lost, or are of these saved ones; if they to whom the Gospel is hid be lost, they to whom it is not hid are saved. They are in this state of salvation already. Oh! happy creatures and blessed state that you are come into. The Gospel is no longer a hidden Gospel to you, though it is to many a one beside. With what admiration may you say, "I thank thee, Oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that when such things have been hid from many a wise and prudent one, thou hast revealed them unto me!" Matt. xi. 24, 25. hast caused thine own bright light to penetrate, to strike through into my very soul, to shine into my heart, as it follows in this context: "And thereupon, though I was a wanderer, a stray and lost creature, thou hast sought thy servant. I went astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments," Psal. cxix. last verse. Thou hast sought thy servant, and found him out. And thou mayst say of thy soul, as the father of his prodigal son; "This my soul was lost and is found," Luke xv. last verse. "We all went astray as lost sheep, and he

bare the iniquities of us all," (Isa. liii. 6.) that we might be recovered and saved at last. Oh you that find Gospel light to enter into your souls, bless God, and admire! The Gospel is not hid from me, I am therefore saved out of my lost state.

But besides these inferences of truth, there is a further and another sort of use that I must proceed to.

Use 2. It may be (upon what hath been before said in opening the doctrine of this text to you) some awakenings may be upon the spirits of some, perhaps some may have been in a going among us, and may say in their hearts, And what is likely upon all this to become of me? What is my final state like to prove? Shall I be saved, or shall I be lost? I would fain give some help in this case, and would in order to it, lead such into some distinction of thoughts, that they may not be confounded in their inquiry. Now this inquiry in general may be capable of being formed into three questions. Either, 1st, The meaning of their inquiry may be, Shall I be certainly saved at last? or, 2ndly, The meaning of their inquiry may be, How shall I do, certainly to know if I am certainly to be lost? or, 3rdly, The meaning of their inquiry may be, How shall I evidence it to myself, or have it evidenced to me, that there is any thing of hope in my case? That going on in the use of prescribed and appointed means, things may be brought at length to a happy issue? That I may have such a present view of my case, as to judge and think of it, that it may be possible that I may be saved at last?

1. Now as to the first of these questions, supposing it to be the question of any whom God hath begun lately to work on; of any that he hath begun lately to awaken:—then I must needs say to that question; Friend, you are too hasty, you make too much haste to think, that when God hath but newly begun with you, you should presently be at a certainty that you shall be saved. This may be more haste than good speed. When you have gone on a considerable tract of time in a serious endeavour of working out your salvation with fear and trembling; and giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure, it will be time enough to put this question then; it is yet unseasonable for you. And then,

2. Supposing that the next be the question with any, How shall I know that I shall be certainly lost? As the former question is an unreasonable one, this is a vain one, altogether vain. If you shall certainly be lost, what can it avail you to know that you shall? or do you think it is possible you should ever come to know it on this side being in hell? It must be by some revelation from God, mediate or immediate; but God doth not use to do vain things, to reveal any thing to no purpose: and this can be to no imaginable purpose. If you shall certainly be lost it can do you no good to foreknow it; and therefore the revelation of it is not to be expected from God any ways, mediately or immediately, and consequently it is a foolish vain question. But,

3. If the question be, How may it appear that there is any thing of hope in my case, that in the use of the prescribed and appointed means, I may, through the grace of God, possibly be saved at last? This is a sober question, and becoming a serious and considerate man, and one that hath a value for his soul, and a reverence for God, the great Disposer of our everlasting soul's concernments. And therefore in reference to this I would be assisting the best I can, and as God shall enable me. And there are many things that are to be said to it. As,

1. That you always ought to hope till there be most apparent reason for total despair. If there be not a reason for total despair, then you are under obligation to admit of some hope; nothing is plainer, that a reasonable creature, capable of futurity and of another state, he hath it as a law in his nature to use prospect, and to exercise hope, in reference to futurity. And I cannot but recollect a noted passage of that Platonic Jew, Philo Judæus, "That hope towards God, in reference to men's future concernments, is of the very essence of man; and he is not to be called a man, a human creature, that hath not hope in reference to his future concernments." And there is a great deal in it: it is to be looked upon as somewhat else than a lavish expression, for God hath (no doubt) contempered the frame of all his creatures to their state: and having made man capable of futurity and eternity in another state, hope cannot but be an essentiating principle in his very nature. And therefore it is very unnatural and a doing violence to ourselves, to endeavour to take away all hope in reference to that futurity which is yet before you, and which you have yet in prospect. You ought to hope while there is no apparent cause of total despair; for whatsoever doth not admit totality, there must be somewhat of the contrary, by reason whereof it doth not so. There can be no imaginable ground upon which a man should not admit of a total despair, but as there is some hope. If there were no hope, despair would be total; if there be found hope, despair cannot be total. And it is matter of duty to you, always to entertain and cherish some hope when there is no apparent reason for total despair. That I fore-lay in the first-place.

2. There can be no reason for a total despair while the Gospel stands unrepealed; while it is neither generally repealed, nor repealed particularly as to you. All that while the connexion remains between faith in Christ and salvation; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. While this Gospel that makes this connexion between believing in the Son of God and not perishing, not being lost, but being saved, stands unrepealed, we have no reason for total despair. Still if I believe, I shall be saved; if I believe in the Son of God, I shall live. I have been a vile creature, it is true; a great rebel, not only against the authority, but against the grace of God; and I have deserved to perish a thousand times over, and to be given up as lost without remedy. But the Gospel is not yet repealed that saith, Whosoever believes in the Son of God shall not perish, shall not be lost, but have everlasting life; it is not repealed in general, nor shall be to the end of the world. And what? will any man say it is repealed as to him? It is repealed as to me? Pray show that repeal! you cannot say that it is repealed as to you, unless you had a Bible reached down from heaven that saith, whosoever believeth shall be saved, whosoever believeth on the Son of God shall not perish, but have everlasting life, except John such an one, or Thomas such an one, or Elizabeth such an one. Show me such a Bible that saith the Gospel is repealed as to you; though I believe never so much I shall not be saved, I am an excepted person. Where is the exception? Show me the Bible wherein is that exception.

Aye, but you may say, It is very true, I doubt not, that if yet I believe I may be saved; but alas! what reason have I to hope that I shall ever be brought to believe, ever be enabled to believe, who have resisted the grace of God, and the Spirit of God so long, so often, so injuriously, so insolently, as I have done? What hope is there that I shall ever be brought to believe? I add therefore,

3. That there is not only hope, nay, I may say ground of confidence, that if you believe you shall be saved, but there is also ground of very great hope, if you do indeed set your minds to inquire and consider about this matter, that you shall be brought to believe. For that is the head which I lay down here as the third in order; that all the while the command, the law, stands in force as to you, that obligeth you to believe, all that while there is a ground and reason left you to hope, that you shall be enabled to believe, when the evangelical law doth particularly oblige you amongst the rest that live under the Gospel, to believe in the Son of God, that you may not perish but have everlasting life, as much as if there were a law made in your case alone. If there were a particular law made concerning you, and laying the charge upon you—Do thou believe on the Son of God, that thou mayst not perish but have everlasting life; I say, you are as much obliged to believe on the Son of God, as if there were a particular law made concerning you, and none but you, concerning you alone. This is the command of God, this is the law, "that we believe on him whom he hath sent," John iii. 33. It cannot be said that because there is such a law that obligeth you to believe in Jesus Christ, therefore you certainly shall believe; but it is to be collected with the greatest clearness imaginable, that there being such a law obliging you to believe, you have reason to hope you shall be enable to believe if

you do seriously design the thing. Is it to be thought that God should come (as it were) directly to you, that the Son of God should apply himself directly to you, sinner; I charge thee, accept my Son, believe in my Son, take him to be thy Redeemer, thy Saviour, thy Lord; and that there should be no hope that ever you should do so, or that he will give you any help in order thereunto? This is the most unimaginable thing in all the world.

Question. But you may perhaps say, How shall I do to understand this, that I am under obligation to believe on the Son of God, that I may not perish, that I may not be lost!

Answer. To that I say, (that I may leave this a clear and undisputed thing in your thoughts,) either you must be so obliged to believe in the son of God, to receive and take him for yours, your Lord and Saviour, or else, your not doing so is no sin. Now, where is that person that dares to produce himself, and say, I live under the Gospel, that Gospel is come to me, whereof this is the great fundamental law, the command of the great Author of it, even of the God of heaven; this is his commandment, that we believe on his Son; but it is a commandment that doth not oblige me? Where is the man that dares say, If I live an infidel under the Gospel all the rest of my time, I am no sinner in it? If believing be not your duty, not believing is not your sin. But what? is there any body that can say, or dare say, that to refuse Christ is not his sin? Then to accept him is duty. Therefore doth this Gospel, still as you live under it, urge it on you as a duty out of hand to come to an agreement with the Son of God; resign thyself up to him, put thyself into his hands, and at his feet; into his hands to be saved, and at his feet to be subject and to obey him. This the Gospel chargeth on you; and while it doth so, while it calls you to repentance, and calls you to faith, you have reason to hope still: I have God's warrant, why should I not expect his help? If he calls me, why shall I not think he will help me, help me to repent, and help me to believe in his Son, that I may not be finally and for ever lost! And again,

4. You can do nothing in your circumstances more pleasing and grateful to God, than to hope in his mercy; thus to state your case, I am naturally a lost creature, a perishing creature, I have deserved to perish over and over; that a Spirit of divine light and grace should never visit my soul more, or look after me more; I have highly deserved it; but yet I have heard of the nature of God, that he is immensely good and gracious; his name hath told me his nature, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, pardoning iniquity, trangression, and sin," Exod. xxxiv. 5. I will throw myself upon that name, I will cast myself on his mercy; I have nothing to do but that; and that, why should I stick to do? Now, I say, you please him, you please him beyond all things that in your circumstances you are any way capable of doing. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him and that hope in his mercy.—Pleasure in them! Strange that any act of an abject, guilty, impure, perishing wretch should be pleasing and grateful to the pure, holy, glorious, ever-blessed God; that he should be pleased with any act of mine. Why, it is not as it is yours, but it is with reference to the object, as it is a thing suitable unto him, a tribute due to his great and glorious name. It is the best acknowledgment you can make of his deity, of his godhead, of his most excellent perfect nature, comprehensive of all perfection, but wherein we are taught to conceive this as the most eminent, when we are told that God is love. Here is a poor creature, as insolent as he hath been, (saith God,) as proud, as full of enmity and malignity against me, now I see he comes to acknowledge me to be God, that is, acknowledgeth me to be merciful, infinitely, immensely merciful, beyond limits merciful, beyond expressions merciful. He takes pleasure in them that hope in his mercy. Now (saith he) they give me my due, now they acknowledge me to be God, that they will yet hope in my mercy. Remember all this while that it is hope that I am encouraging you to, without security; you have reason to hope, but you have no reason to be secure, no more that he hath who in a battle encompassed with thousands about him alive yet, yet alive, but still deaths are flying about him as thick as hail. You have reason to hope, but no reason to be secure; but if you hope, you do the most grateful thing to God, you pay him the most pleasant grateful tribute that such an abject creature as any of us is capable of rendering to him; you give him the proper glory of the Deity, boundlessly good and gracious, rich in mercy. This is to own him to be God, to own him to be infinite, to own that his ways do as far exceed your ways, and his thoughts your thoughts, as east and west, and heaven and earth, are asunder, Isa. lv. 8, 9. Again,

5. Know that it is not for you to prescribe limits to the exercise of this mercy, it is not for you to set bounds to it. If God limit himself, and any way signify that he hath done so, so be it; but that he hath no way signified. But it is great insolency for any of us to talk of limiting him; to say, so far the patience of God shall extend, and no further; beyond such a sermon he will never give me one minute's addition to the day of grace. It is not for you to limit him; if he limit himself, you have nothing to say to that, but that he hath never told you he hath done, or will do, in reference to your case. But I would have you to be possessed with the apprehension how uncreaturely a thing it is for any of us to take upon us to limit God, and set a day to the exercise of his patience, his sparing mercy, his bounty, and his saving mercy. If you do rightly take up this matter, you will understand, that there is in despair the highest presumption. There is not in any thing higher presumption than there is in absolute despair. If you allow yourselves absolutely to despair, and say, God will never look after my soul; then nothing remains to me but to abandon it to perish. I say, you cannot be guilty of a higher presumption than doth lie in this despair; for it is for you to take upon you to limit God, to measure God; you take upon you hereby to determine what infiniteness can do, and what it cannot do. This is very bold presumption. This is most uncreaturely arrogance; for you to take upon you to set God his limits and bounds. No; say I will always wait, and always hope, let him defer as long as he pleaseth; but let me lie a prostrate creature at his foot, still in fears, and tears, and tremblings; though it be till I perish, I will perish in this posture, rather than ever to say he cannot help me, he will not save me; it will not consist with the limits of his patience and bounty towards a poor wretch to save me. Take heed of saying so. There is high presumption in this despair.

There are many other things behind.

SERMON XII.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid.

WE have the use in hand of this terrible word; sundry inferences of truth we recommended to you from it; and proceeded to other uses, wherein the design was to speak suitably to the case of awakened souls among us, that have made known their case, and their solicitous sad thoughts. We have had regard to this great inquiry, What shall we do that we may understand our own case, and how matters are like finally to issue with us?—Shall we be saved, or shall we be lost? And several things were spoken to that which we stated as a sober question; which answers were general, and more fundamental to what was to ensue. And those things being forelaid, we shall now go on to give some characters that may be distinguished somewhat of the state of persons under the Gospel; so as that, if they be found, will give ground of hope; if they be not found, it will administer much ground of fear.

But here you must take the matter thus: that, for such characters as those which I shall mention, the discerning of them actually upon yourselves is never intended so to encourage your hope as if no apprehension of danger should still remain; you are not to hope without apprehension of

* Preached April 28th, 1691.

danger; and if such characters are not found, you are not to fear without apprehension of remedy; because (as hath been told you) the design is not to tell you who shall certainly be saved, or who certainly lost; but only to show what cause there is, or may be, of more or less hope or fear, in reference to the final issue of things with you. And so,

1. It gives much ground of hope when any do find in themselves a formed desire of understanding distinctly the terms of life and death; when any would fain know upon what terms they may expect to be saved or perish in the final issue of things; when they do not desire to be unacquainted with the true tenor of the Gospel as touching these matters; but accurately to know what is required, that they may live, and escape the wrath that is to come. That hiddenness of the Gospel that is in connexion with the being lost, is with those with whom it hath this fatal event, a chosen thing, a voluntary thing; it is hid by an affected blindness of heart. Men are blind, as being unwilling to see, Ephes. iv. 18. "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." If thou hadst known; it is plain, that that not knowing was faulty, inasmuch as their being afterwards hid was penal; and it could not be faulty but as being voluntary,—that they did not desire to know the things of their peace; whoever of you can avow it before the great Searcher of hearts, and speak it to him as the sense of your souls, "Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I do desire to understand what the tenor and import of that rule is by which souls are to live or die for ever; I desire to understand it as it is,—not to have it disguised to me,—not to have it misrepresented, according as the foregoing expressions are; wherein the apostle protests against the disguising of the word, and clothing of things with specious false colours; but approving and commending themselves in the manifestation of the very truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God, 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2. They (I say) that can avow this have ground of hope; and they that would not have it so, they are persons to whom the Gospel is hid, and are lost, as the series of discourse shows. You have much cause to hope God will drive things to a good issue with you at length, if you do seriously desire to understand his mind in the Gospel, what it doth determine concerning the way of saving sinners; which, if they take, they are saved; if they do not, they are lost. When this is your sense, "For thy name's sake lead me and guide me; show me thy way, I would fain walk in thy truth!" But for such as desire only to have smooth things said unto them; and if the true doctrine of the Gospel will be terrible; if it will look with an unfavourable aspect upon my vicious inclinations,—Let me never hear it. If any say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" (Job xxi. 14.) "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from among us," Isaiah xxx. 11. They say to the prophets, Prophesy not; we do not desire to have that bright light stand so directly in view before our eyes; oh, might it cease! oh, might it disappear! This is a dreadful token; a very dreadful token; and if any, more than others, are in danger of being lost under the Gospel, these are the men. They that receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved, (their spirits could by no means comport with the truth,) are given up that they might perish,—that they "might be damned," 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. And,

It is very hopeful where there is a great sense of remaining ignorance; when any do think very meanly of the knowledge that they have of those great and important things of God, that do concern souls so very nearly. Agur is brought in saying, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;" (Prov. xxx. 2.) when there is a very humble, self-abasing opinion taken up and maintained of our own meanness, blindness, and darkness, the great imperfection and defectiveness of our knowledge in the most needful things. This looks very hopefully; and on the other hand it is a very dreadful token, when any think themselves so wise that they need be taught no more. There is more hope of a fool than of such a one, that is wise in his own conceit; he seems marked out for destruction, that thinks he is so well acquainted with all the great secrets and mysteries of godliness that he needs no further instruction; and thereupon despises and hates it. "He that hateth instruction shall die." They are plain, peremptory words; and nothing is in the nature of the thing of a more destructive tendency. As the moralist said, *Multi pervenissent ad sapientiam, &c.* many might have attained to wisdom if they had not thought they had attained to it already. So many might have attained to the saving knowledge of God in Christ, if they had not thought they had already attained. Again,

3. It is a very hopeful token, when there is any perception of knowledge growing in these great things; when we can apprehend that light doth come in by the appointed means; that God hath shined into our heart, as it follows in this context: "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them;" but "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts," 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6. That is a sign then the Gospel is not quite hid, if some beams of light be darted in, be injected. If you find there is an increase, it is to be increased with "the increase of God," as the apostle's expression is; (Colos. ii. 19.) for this is divine knowledge that we are speaking of, the "knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And it is to them that do observe themselves a perceptible thing, and a thing to be perceived with pleasure, when there is an increase. How grateful is the appulse, the first arrival of any new beam of light, any new thought; when the mind comes to be more and more opened, and things let in upon it, which it is of concernment to it to understand and know. And do but consider, such of you as are more solicitous about the state of your case, and what is like to be the final issue of things with you: You have lived a considerable time under the Gospel; and, what, have you gained no acquaintance with the great contents thereof? There are many things discovered concerning the state of man by nature, do you understand nothing of them? Do you not know that he is a degenerate creature, that he hath a blind mind, a corrupt, depraved heart? That he is wrapped up in guilt, and exposed thereupon to divine displeasure? It reveals much of a Redeemer; do you understand nothing of that?—who this Redeemer is, the eternal Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, the heir of all things; that he came into this world, took human flesh, and died a sacrifice for sin? Do not you understand this? and that hereupon God is well pleased with him for his righteousness sake, that Divine justice acquiesceth, expects no higher, no other sacrifice?—That, whereas there must be a great change wrought in the temper of men's spirits to make them capable of the duty of time, and the felicity of eternity; an Almighty Spirit is obtained by the blood of that sacrifice, that it should go forth to do this great work upon the souls of men; so that you are not to be left hopeless, struggling in your own impotence to attempt and undertake (as it were) a new creation in your own souls; but that Spirit will be given to them that ask it, and you may draw in its influences as so much vital breath. These things the Gospel acquaints you with; and do you understand nothing of them? Hath no light come in by all this discovery all this while? Indeed it is a fearful token where there is no knowledge by long-sitting under the Gospel; when any man's case doth admit it to be said of them, they are "ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth:" a sort of persons marked out for separation from God and all good men; from such turn aside; such as have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it; (2 Tim. iii. 7.) and are "ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth;" it is a people of no understanding, "therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour;" (Isaiah xxvii. 11.) for, (as hath been said,) ignorance under the Gospel, of that it hath made necessary to be understood, and done in order to salvation; it is most voluntary, and therefore comes to be punished by the Gospel's being hid, and their being lost, if they finally prove to be so. And again,

4. It yet will look well and hopefully, if you find that you have a real value for the Gospel; if you esteem highly

of it; if you consider it as the "word of life," as the Gospel of your salvation; and if such notions as are given you of it, and under which you are taught to conceive of it, have recommended it to you, and you look upon it as a sacred and venerable thing; if you do not come to hear a sermon as if you were to hear a story told you; to hear the word of God as a tale that is told; but the word of it recommends itself to you as a majestic thing, as carrying a divine stamp and impress upon it; if you be in any measure awed by it, so as to tremble at the divine word,—this is a most comfortable character where it can be found. It is towards such that God is looking with favour, when any come and sit trembling under his word. He will not look with slight and despising eyes upon such; he looks upon them with indulgence and a favourable regard,(Isaiah lxvi. 2.) and you may look upon it, that he is in the way with you, while you find that disposition in your own spirits towards his word. That he may reckon, I will speak to such, and not be disregarded in what I say. If there be not so pleasant a relish of divine truths; if yet there be an awe of them; though they do not appear amiable to you, if yet they appear awful and majestic; and you consider, when you attend upon Gospel dispensations, you have to do with divine things; and you consider the word that you do hear, not as the words of men, but as they are, indeed, the words of God; there is hope in this case: this hath a good aspect, looks promisingly towards a good issue. But when the Gospel itself is looked upon as a contemptible thing, as much regard would be showed to a fable; this is of most dreadful import; when the very means of our salvation is come into contempt with us, as they that in a dangerous sickness are brought to despise the only proper remedies that can be thought of, as capable for recovering them, and saving their lives, this is a dangerous token. Again,

5. It looks hopefully, if you find that the intention of your mind is much engaged in hearing the word; it is a natural consequent of your having awful thoughts of it, of your esteeming highly of it as a divine revelation; that which should be immediately consequent hereupon must be a very earnest intention of spirit in hearing of it, to attend it as that wherein my very life is concerned; the word saith, "Hear, and your souls shall live," Isa. lv. 3. Thereupon you must say, I will hear, that my soul may live. If this be your design in hearing, it is very hopeful indeed, that you are not likely to be lost under the Gospel. If this be the temper of your minds, I come to hear that my soul may live; and so you watch every word; you observe and bend the strength of your minds, as much as in you is, to attend and listen to what you hear; as the eyes of the assembly are said to be fastened on our Lord when he took the book of God, and expounded and opened it to them, Luke iv. 20. But if there be no attention in hearing; if persons come to such assemblies as these to see, or help to make a show only, to see a reed shaken with the wind; if this be your errand, you come to please your fancy, or you come because you do not else know what to do with so much time; you do not know how to employ an otherwise waste hour, and therefore go to this or that church or meeting, (as it happens,) throw yourself in here or there; this is of very threatening import. If this temper of mind should continue with you, it looks as fatally as any can be thought; that a man will be lost under that Gospel at last which he never regards, to which he gives no attention. It may be, you are not at leisure, your thoughts are otherwise taken up; as it was with Ezekiel's hearers, "They sit before thee as my people," (Ezek. xxxiii. 31.) and with their mouths they show much love; (with their countenances they do, they carry the appearance and show of those that come out of love to my worship, and to exercise devotedness to me;) but their hearts go after their covetousness; their heart was wandering all the while. I do not speak, in this case, of the incursion, the surprising incursion, of vain and unsuitable thoughts, the wanderings which we sincerely bind and set ourselves against, and cannot totally hinder; but I speak of letting our spirits at liberty to wander, keeping them under no restraint, letting our thoughts rove for such an hour or two together, when we are to be attending to things that concern the life and death of our souls. This is a very dismal token, wheresoever it is to be found. If it be thus usually with any, none more likely to be lost under the Gospel than such. And again,

6. It looks hopefully, if, so far as you have understood, and, by earnest attention from time to time, come to know the true meaning and import of the Gospel, and what the terms of life and death for souls really are; you do thereupon desire to have your hearts wrought up to those terms; and there is no wish entertained with you, that you give harbour to, that the tenor of the whole Gospel were otherwise than it is; you do not desire that the terms of life and death should be brought down to a compliance with your inclinations; but you desire your hearts may be wrought up to them; and say, Do not make me a Gospel like myself, but make me like the Gospel. Is that your sense? It looks very encouragingly; I would take this Gospel just as it is; I find it requires the receiving Christ Jesus as a Saviour and as a Lord; I am willing it should be thus; I do not desire there should be any change to gratify any ill inclination of mine in this tenor of the Gospel. I find it forbids all manner of sin; and reigning sin, under the severest penalty; that wherever it reigns it dooms too. I submit to this state of the case; I desire to have every thing of sin down, not to be in dominion. It may be, there are some fainter desires of this kind having place where a real thorough work is not yet wrought. But it is well there is so far a tendency towards it; that you are right in your aims and designs, and that you have the true mark before your eye; that is, to have the great and proper impression of the Gospel inwrought into your souls, and they made agreeable to it; and that you do not wish to have a Gospel formed on purpose to be more agreeable to you. When once a soul is transformed into the likeness and image of the Gospel; this is it that doth most certainly characterize it for heaven and eternal glory. You have "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you," (or into which you have been delivered, as that may be read, Rom. vi. 17.) this is to have that "fruit unto holiness" habitually first, the end whereof will be "eternal life," as it follows in the same chapter; and while you are aiming at this, and tending to this, the matter carries a very hopeful aspect with it. As on the other hand, it is very dreadful, when that, whatsoever wit and skill any have more than others is all employed this way, to wrest, and torture, and mis-shape the rule by which their present practice is to be measured, and by which God's final judgment is to be measured concerning them. When the Gospel is not to transform you, but you to transform the Gospel; you would not be shapen according to it, but you will fain shape it according to yourselves, according to your own hearts; nothing doth look more like one to be lost and perish under the Gospel than this. And,

7. Whereas, that Gospel by which you are to be saved, (if ever you be saved,) is a Gospel of reconciliation; it is a very hopeful character if you do really desire and value friendship with God; if his love and favour be of real value with you; when you can speak this as the sense of your souls, "In his favour is life;" (Psal. xxx. 5.) which you must understand did not only hold forth the truth of the thing, but the sense of a good man, a well-minded man, concerning that truth. It is very true, indeed, that, if you consider the thing itself, objectively taken, in the favour of God stands the life of every one; but this doth not only speak the truth of the thing, but it speaks the sense of a good and honest heart; that he accounts that in the favour of God stands his very life. And, do you really account so?—so as whatever you have to enjoy in the world besides that, cannot satisfy you, if your hearts yet hang in doubt within you concerning your state God-ward. It is not corn, and wine, and oil, that you wish for, and can satisfy yourselves with; but, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance, and that will put more joy into our hearts than when corn, and wine, and oil increase!" Oh, there can be no worse character, than when it is a matter of indifference with any, whether God have a favour for them, or no favour! His friendship and his enmity is all one to them. Under a Gospel of reconciliation, how likely are such to be lost, when the very end of this Gospel of reconciliation between God and them is a disregarded, despised thing; when men can go all the day long through the hurry

of their affairs and businesses, and their thoughts are filled and taken up with vanity and with impertinences, in comparison, but no room is left for one such thought throughout a whole day, How stand things between me and heaven? Am I under the Divine favour or disfavour? How fearful was the case of those Israelites, when they had, at the same time, meat in their mouths and wrath upon their heads? God "gave them quails for their use, and they did eat, and the wrath of God came upon them while they were eating," Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31. "On the wicked he rains snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest," Psal. xi. 6. "He is angry with the wicked every day," Psal. vii. 11. They that concern not themselves about any such matters, it is all one to them, Give me what will please my appetite, sense, or flesh, and let God be pleased or displeased. I am willing to run the hazard of that. This looks very fatally, when it is so.

And then again, as consequent to this,

8. Truly, fear itself doth give much ground of hope. It is a very hopeful character upon you, when you are really afraid lest a controversy should still depend, and not be taken up between God and you: "Blessed is he that (thus) feareth always," Prov. xxviii. 14. And so it is, on the other hand, a very black character, where there is no such thing. He that hardeneth his heart against such fear, shall fall into mischief. And again,

9. Where there is much consideration about the affairs of your souls, and your hearts are much taken up in musing and meditating on these matters, it is a hopeful sign. An unconsidering soul is a perishing soul,—hath the character upon it of a lost soul. But if your mind be full of thoughts from time to time; or, if there be many times when you can set yourselves on purpose to consider the state of your souls, and your case God-ward, this looks very hopefully; that is, that God is at work with you, that he is dealing with your spirits; for you are not to assume it to yourselves that there are any such good thoughts, any which have that tendency, which have that look. "We are not sufficient to think any thing as of ourselves;" (2 Cor. iii. 5.) that is, which is good. Indeed, one ground why many are so apt excessively to torture and disquiet their spirits with the apprehension of an irrecoverable lost state, is from too much arrogance; that is, they are apt to arrogate to themselves such things, which, upon reflection, they cannot deny are in them; for you must know there is common grace that leads to special. If it hath not reached up to special, it hath a tendency and leadingness thitherward. If God be dealing with spirits by his common grace, it looks hopefully if it be comported with; and when thoughts do throng in from time to time with you, that you cannot do as the most do, that is, throw away all concern about your souls, as it may be the generality, so far as you have opportunity to observe, trouble not themselves (as you can discern) with any thoughts at all, what shall become of them hereafter. But there have been such thoughts which have been struck in as so many darts and arrows into your hearts. You are not to think that you have been the authors of them to yourselves, but that God is at work with you, is dealing with you, is in the way with you; and this (I say) looks hopefully, if it be duly comported with. And yet, again,

10. It is a very hopeful, encouraging character, if you should find upon consideration that you have arrived no further, and that you have not gotten to a firmer, more settled state in holiness and walking with God, yet you do also find a great disposition in yourself to self-accusing; that you are apt to criminate yourself, to find fault with yourself, and to lay load on yourself with blame; to wrap up yourself (as it were) with shame; that your proficiency hath been so slow and little all this while. This looks very hopefully; when this is the sense of your souls, looking in, and looking up at the same time, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The publican's character was a good character, and a hopeful one, compared with the opposite one of the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 13. The Pharisee and the publican both go up together to the temple to pray; the Pharisee hath nothing to take notice of in himself but his good deeds, (and very pitiful ones they were,) "I fast twice in the week; I give alms of alll I possess;" I pay "tithes, mint, anise, and cummin;" (we are told elsewhere they punctually paid these tithes;) "I am not as other men, nor as this publican." The publican hath nothing to say; but, standing at awful distance, cries out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And the publican (it is said) "went home to his house justified rather than the other." Such as are full of self-accusing thought, they live with perhaps too tormenting fears concerning their state God-ward, yet there is that of intermingled good with it that leads towards a good issue at length, and which carries a plain indication, that they are not to look upon their state as a lost state. And, especially,

11. If there be any relentings towards God, any tender relenting and self-bemoaning. There may be self-accusing without these kindly genuine touches of remorse that there should be; and there may be of them too, and in too low a degree, and in too transient a manner. But while there is any thing of them, there is real ground of hope that God is dealing with you, and is likely to carry on the work further, according as you duly comport with him in what he hath began, and is yet doing. "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," Jer. xxxi. 18. Refer that to what goes before, and you will see there is "hope in their end." "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself;"—things are like to have a good issue yet, though he hath been wayward, cross, perverse, and rebellious; yet, let me listen to him; do not I hear him bemoaning himself?—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, and secretly saying, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." There is hope in the end, as to this case. It looks as if it would have a good end at last. A heart hard as a rock under the Gospel, is a dreadful thing; the impenitent heart, the heart that cannot repent. And I add, lastly,

12. If there be yet a resolution to persist, to go on in the way that leads towards life, this looks well; you have not yet attained; you are not yet at a certainty; but yet you are resolved to go on, to hold on your course according to that warning given by good Samuel to the people of Israel, that were now set a trembling, and in a most dreadful consternation, what would become of them; they dreamed of nothing, when God thundered upon them, and when the lightning from heaven testified divine displeasure; they, I say, thought of nothing but destruction. Well, (saith Samuel,) do not you, for your part, "turn aside from following the Lord;" he will not cast you off if you persevere in your way, and turn not aside from following him. He will not cast off his people, because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people; he will cast off none that do not first cast off him. And many such, too, he may recall and recover; but while there is a resolution with you, come of it what will, I will never forsake the holy way; I will spend my days in prayers and tears: I will never give over waiting and seeking, whatever comes of it. Oh! what an emphatical benediction is that we find pronounced in this case! "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors; for whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord," Prov. viii. 34, 35. There is a blessing upon all waiting ones. Pray, take that blessing home, whosoever of you are yet trembling ones, suspenseful ones,—you that have hearts full of doubt, you know not what will become of things with you; if there be that resolution to wait and persist in a known prescribed way of duty, he that so doth, hath a blessing pronounced from the God of his salvation; there is a blessing over his head from the God of his salvation, to show you how little liable he is to the heavy doom of being irrecoverably lost. That God, who glories in the title of the God of our salvation, he is breathing down a blessing upon you all, while that you are resolved upon a course of waiting; I will wait till I die; "I will call upon him as long as I live;" I will never give over following him, let him do what he will with me. This is the course that is never likely to have an ill end.

SERMON XIII.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

WE are, upon the use of this, and the last we insisted upon was of inquiry; or, we intended therein to assist their inquiry who may be solicitous touching the state of their own case, whether they are not lost irrecoverably while they live under a Gospel that aims at the saving of souls, but which they apprehend doth them no good, and they fear never will. I have in reference to such, the last time, given sundry characters that will bespeak their state upon whom they are found, not to be hopeless; that it is such, as concerning which they ought by no means to conclude that they are lost, that they are out of the reach of mercy.

And, as to what thereupon remains, I have only this further to do, that is, to lay down two conclusions, in which I shall sum up much of the meaning of what hath been said; that is,

1. That there can be no hope that their state shall be good and safe at last, who continually live in the neglect of those methods which the Gospel they live under prescribes in order to their salvation. And,

2. That there can be no ground for them to fear they shall be finally lost, who, with dependance on the grace of the Spirit of Christ, are resolved, to their uttermost, to use the methods which the Gospel doth prescribe in order to salvation. The one sort have, in their present state, no reasonable ground to hope; the other, in their present posture, have no reasonable ground of despairing fear. These two conclusions sum up what I would leave with you upon this subject. And thereupon I shall say somewhat, 1st, By way of warning, and (if that will not do) by way of lamentation, to the former sort. And, 2dly, somewhat by way of exhortation and encouragement to the latter.

1. As to the former, I must repeat it to them, that they have no ground for a present hope that they shall be saved, in the continued neglect of those means and methods which the Gospel hath prescribed for salvation. And I would recommend to such, for their warning, those plain and awful words, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13. There is an injunction with the reason of it, and both the injunction and the reason have their distinct parts. As to the injunction, there is the substance of it, with its modification. And the enforcing reason thereof hath in it considerable too of the substance thereof, and its modification, each of the latter corresponding with each of the former: Work you; why? for God works; do you work with fear and trembling, for God works at will and pleasure. You have reason to work, because God works. You have reason to work "with fear and trembling," because he works under no obligation, but at absolute liberty, so that he may desist when he will. If you resist, if you withstand, if you work not in subserviency, in subordination to his gracious work, he may retire and leave you to perish when he will; he works at will and pleasure, therefore do you work with "fear and trembling." And since we find the Scripture doth speak after this tenor, here and in many other places, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate,"—"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure,"—"They that run in a race, run all, but one obtains the prize; so run that you may obtain:" as if he should say, Do you so run as if you were the only person in all the world that should be saved, and you might be that one; that is, as if you did know, that but one person in all the world should be saved, and you might be that one. "But one obtains the prize;" run as though there were but one that should be saved, and that you may be that one. Since (I say) this is the tenor of Scripture in reference to the great affairs of our salvation, or that we may not be finally lost under this Gospel; there can be no present hope, no ground for a present rational hope for them that do counterwork these stated methods that God hath prescribed for the saving of souls. I will not say, that God will never reclaim you; we know not what boundless immense goodness, and the riches of mercy, that are with him may do;—but, I say, you have not a ground for a present rational hope; the way you are in takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death. You are in the way to perish. Such as have determined within themselves they will continue in a sinful endeavour of pleasing their flesh, and in a sinful neglect of saving their souls, and will admit no thought that tends to their disquiet, and to cross them in their sinful course; but they live under the Gospel. They (I say) that do so conjoin with the profession of the Gospel the contempt of it, are never to expect that they are to be saved by the Gospel they despise; or that the grace of it shall save them, while the authority of it doth not rule them. They have no reason to expect that. Therefore, if this should be the continued resolution of any; (I hope better things as to you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak;) but if this should be the continuing resolution and posture of any soul, nothing remains but to lament their case.

I would take up a lamentation for such, and invite all that are serious to join with me in lamenting the wretched forlorn state of such as are perishing upon these terms. Sundry things concur to give us here the representation and prospect of a most dismal and deplorable condition; a state that doth even claim and challenge from us to be lamented; that we lament, while all endeavours of remedying it seem still frustrate and in vain. Why,

(1.) Such are perishing under the Gospel; that is, they are benighted at noon; they have created to themselves a horrid darkness in the midst of a bright and clear day;—they are lost in a day of salvation. This is the day of salvation; it is so (it is to be hoped) to many others; and, oh, what a fearful thing it is to be lost, and perish amidst a company that are taking hold of salvation, or of whom salvation is taking hold? And,

(2.) They are the more fearfully lost, not only under the means of salvation, but by them; Gospel light strikes them blind: "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light;" the sweet vital savours of the Gospel strike them dead; become to them the "savour of death unto death." They are so much the more miserably lost, by how much the more there is of apt and suitable endeavours used in vain for the saving of them. The blessed God opens to them the design he hath in hand of saving sinners; he hath sent his Son with direct application to them, "to seek and to save them that are lost;" his Spirit strives with them, and against all its motions, all its convictions, they are breaking their own way to eternal ruin. How dismal is the case, to think that they are so often invited, yet are lost; warned, and yet lost! lost! Exhorted, and yet lost! Besought, and yet lost! Wept over, and yet lost! They descend, and go down and perish under the entreaties, and against the prayers and cries, of friends and relations, and of such to whom their souls are dear even as their own souls. And again,

(3.) It is to be considered that it is their souls that are lost. This is the subject of the loss. Ah, poor wretch! if thou hadst only lost an estate; if thou hadst only lost an eye; if thou hadst only lost a limb, a hand, a foot, a leg, an arm, here had been either some remedy, or some relief for this loss; but to lose a soul, an immortal spirit; to have that precipitated and plunged into an eternal ruin,—what reparation, what remedy for this loss? And,

(4.) Such are lost when they never thought of it, or, it may be, when they had the positive thought all the while of being saved; when they speak Peace, peace, to themselves, sudden destruction, a sudden destruction, comes upon them. Wast thou not wont to say, I shall be safe in my neglect of God? I shall live a prayerless life, and be safe? I shall live a vicious life, and be safe? I may please my flesh, and gratify my sense all my days, and be safe? Are they not wont to think so? They perish when they think not of it; they are ingulfed and swallowed up in an unfeared ruin; sunk the worse, and so much the

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more dreadfully, by how much the less it was dreaded, the more fearfully the less it was feared. And,

(5.) It is very deplorable, in their case, to think of the companions that they have been formerly associated with, and that they are associated with now. Such as have been companions with them in exercises of religion, such as have been companions with them in acts of wickedness, and such as are now companions with them in torments, fearful aggravations of their being thus lost, arise from such. Those that they have been wont to hear sermons with, and that they have been associated with in the drunken debauches that have drowned all the remembrance of them. Those that they have been with (it may be) under convictions, under some good impressions; and with them in those acts of wickedness that have stupified their souls, and bereft them of sense, and abolished and obliterated all the impressions that were made on them before. What heightenings will here be of the wo!—what enforcement of the torment of that state, when the wretched partakers therein together shall fall to mutual upbraidings, criminations, and recriminations of one another!—when one shall say, Oh, cursed be the day that ever I saw thy face! and the other shall retort, and say, Oh, cursed be the day that ever I saw thine!—that we who did sometimes pray together, and sat under the word of God together, could encourage and heighten one another to that pitch of wickedness, to be sensual together, debauched together, vain together, drunken together, wicked together, in affront to all that light that shone in our faces, and that shone in our very consciences! And,

(6.) What a mighty addition will it make to be perpetually reflecting, in that state wherein thou canst not choose, canst not cease to be an everlasting companion to thyself?—when one is to be but his own companion, as he hath made himself very ill company to himself, he cannot but be much worse in the infernal state, when there shall be an everlasting self-consciousness of former wickedness and present resentments that cannot be avoided, and against which it is impossible his soul should now be able to fortify itself. Oh, the pitiable state of going down to perdition with an enlightened mind! Consider that. Think of it over again. The pitiable state (I say) of going down to perdition with an enlightened mind; to descend with rational principles in a man's soul, which by how much the less heretofore they did serve for government, do so much the more effectually now serve for torment;—that light that did not govern, did then condemn, and doth now torment. The clearer the light the more fervent the fire, when that light turns all into flames, and tormenting flames; so much the more light, so much the more the fervour of that flame. To reflect in that cursed society, that every man shall be to himself his own cursed companion in the place of torment, upon the rational principles that he had admitted, understood, and assented to before; and to think then how very reasonable (oh, how very reasonable!) were such sentiments as these, often inculcated on me in my former state, that a creature can never have been made to be his own end; that it could never be supposed that a reasonable, intelligent, immortal spirit, was principally designed to serve a piece of clay; that a religion, that could never suffice to govern a man, would never suffice to save him; that that which doth not sufficiently distinguish one from a wicked world, shall never distinguish him from a perishing world. How often have such things as these been inculcated! and who sees not the reason of them now? But when they shall be revived in the future state, in that state wherein the wretched creature finds himself finally and irrecoverably lost, how will the light of all these rational principles glare in his face! Then what a stupid foolish creature was I, that could not consider these plain things before, when I saw how plain they were! When one shall reflect and bethink himself, How often was I told that that religion, which should end in felicity, must begin in transformation! If it shall make my soul happy hereafter, it must change me now, it must have changed it in the former state; it must have implanted the love of God in it,—it must have inwrought into it the præmordial principles of the Divine likeness, otherwise the temper of my own soul must banish me from the Divine presence, and associate me with devils and damned spirits, throughout a long eternity. How often did I hear these things! How plain were they and unanswerable! How impossible to oppose any thing to the light and evidence of them! These are things wherein the Gospel doth recommend itself to the very consciences of men that sit under it, as the foregoing words speak, "we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." They have done so, who have spoken to you at this rate, and about such things as these. If such a Gospel be hid; if the things contained in it that carry so convictive cogent light and evidence in them; if these things (I say) be hid, what can the issue be but to be lost? And how terrible will that be! How dreadful must the case be, when any find themselves finally lost, and to have nothing to do in a vast immense eternity, but to revolve these plain convictive thoughts in their own wretched minds! And again, it may be added,

(7.) What an additional weight of misery will there be from reflecting upon those that were companions with many such in their former state, and did take the right and safe way, and persisted and persevered in it to the end! What tormenting resentments will arise from the thoughts of such! To think of such and such a one, we have gone to the assemblies together, we have set together under the same sermons. It may be such a one was convinced, and so was I; perhaps we compared thoughts with one another: the convictions with such and such issued in a thorough work. Such and such a one being convinced did shut up himself in secret; he wrought out the matter in prayer with the blessed God. The thing issued at length in a solemn covenant between him and the Redeemer; he gave up his soul, infolded in the bonds of an everlasting covenant, into his hands who is the great and only Saviour of souls. And why did not I do so too? We have had the same warning; "My son, when sinners entice thee, consent thou not," Prov. i. 10. Oh, why did he take warning, and why did not I? Why did he pray, and why did not I? Why did he covenant with God, and why did not I? Why did he say God should be his God, and I would never be brought to say it? And, why was he true and steadfast to that covenant, but I was false and unsteady? And,

(8.) How will it wound to think how near the matter was to a determination the other way, at some particular juncture of time; sometimes, when I was deliberating, the balances seemed to hang even, and I was just upon resolving the safe and happy way! O wretched creature that I was! what came into my mind that I should recede and revolt, and fly back when I was urged to it, to come just now to a closure with God in Christ: accept and resign, take him, and give up myself? What madness possessed me, that, when I was just going to do it, I did it not? What plucked me back? Oh, to think how very light matters turned the scale! the other season of sensual delights; this and that vainly to be tried once again; less than a feather cast the balance against my God and my soul, and my eternal well-being; what will these things do in an eternity, when a man hath no other employment for his thoughts? And, lastly, to think,

(9.) That I took him for my adviser whom I might easily have known to be the destroyer of souls, and against whom I know to be the Saviour of them. The counsels that come from our blessed Lord and Redeemer, and the temptations of the wicked one, they carry their own differences so manifestly along with them, that nothing could have been easier than to have discerned and perceived the difference; whose was the voice in the one, and whose in the other; whose language was now spoke, and whose language then. How easy is it to discern the difference when there are suggestions thrown into the mind, "Soul, take thine ease," pursue thy pleasures, admit of no disturbing disquieting thoughts; what were thy faculties made for but to be gratified and indulged? And when it is on the other hand said, Thou dost not know how long thou shalt live; thou hast no command of another breath; thou art to make no boast of to-morrow, for thou dost not know whether ever thou shalt see a to-morrow. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is nigh;" turn to him while he invites thee to turn, and while thou mayst turn and be accepted. How easily are these

voices distinguishable! But for a man to have given himself up to be led captive by Satan at his will, so as he hath no other will but the devil's will; it is the devil's will I should neglect God, I should forfeit my soul, and throw off all thoughts and cares about my eternal concernments; and he hath signified his will in such and such temptations. Oh, that a man should be so infatuated as to comply with the known will of the devil, who is a murderer from the beginning; a liar, and a destroyer of souls; and that against him who is love, and kindness, and goodness itself, and the Redeemer and Saviour of souls! If there be reason to apprehend there are any sitting under the Gospel; under its daily teachings, solicitations, warnings, and counsels; that will yet perish in their own way, till they finally perish; if they will perish unreclaimed, let them not perish unlamented; let us throw tears over ruining and perishing souls; follow them with lamentations to the brink of the pit, though we cannot save them from precipitating themselves into it.

2. But I must change my voice, somewhat turn my style, and apply myself a little to that other sort, such as are full of solicitude lest they should at length perish and be lost under this Gospel, as having it still a hidden Gospel to them, that hath never done them good, and that they are afraid they shall never be the better for. I must repeat to such, that, in the way of your duty, and while with dependance on the grace and Spirit of Christ you are resolved to comply with the prescribed methods of the Gospel, you have no cause to fear you shall be lost; you have as little cause for that fear as the others have for their mad presumptuous hopes. I must leave some things with such, the more fully to convince them of this. As,

(1.) You are in the present way of salvation; the way you are in hath a good tendency; it looks well: it looks towards a good end; it hath a pleasing aspect with it: never fear you shall miscarry while you are in this way; it is the way of life, and the way that tends to life; that is, there is life in the beginning of it, and the further any one makes progress in it, the more and more he penetrates into the regions of life. There is a continual tendency to life in that way; that is, as any do persist and go on further, they do come into fuller and fuller vitality, till they arrive to the present fulness thereof; for eternal life, and the inchoate life of this present state, are both of a piece. There are some previous essays tending to life that you are under the present seizure of, even now, while you are looking heavenward, looking God-ward: it is somewhat of life, or of preparatory workings that have that tendency, and that cognation have taken hold of you, because that it is plain such thoughts are internal, and so are the springs of an internal motion; and there is no internal motion, or from within, which is not to be looked upon as a kind of vital motion; though it is true, indeed, there are fainter beginnings that are extinguishable, yet there is a great matter to have some beginnings; for if they are yet such as are extinguishable, they are yet also such as are improvable, and may rise and come higher, till they come beyond the sphere and verge of common grace, into the verge of special grace, which two spheres do very closely border and touch upon one another; and he that is upon the extremity, the extreme verge (as I may speak) of common grace, is often upon the very verge and brink of special grace. And,

(2.) As you are in the way of God, a way that hath a good look and tendency, God is in the way with you; it cannot but be, but that he is with you, and will be with you, while you are with him; you find him with you; you are to impute it to his being with you, to his presence with you, that there are inclinations and dispositions that tend heavenward, that tend towards that good and blessed state. You are to take heed of arrogating any thing in this kind to yourselves. Suppose it be yet but common grace,—common grace is grace; and if it be grace, it is not nature; it is not to be attributed to you,—you are not to arrogate and claim it to yourselves; This is of me. The thinking of a good thought, we have not a sufficiency for, as of ourselves; we are not to claim that: and there is many a good thought that may be short of saving grace; but we should take heed of assuming it to ourselves; and therefore, if there be inclinations and dispositions towards that way and towards that state which you are to design for, and professedly bending your thoughts towards, yet say, you have a Divine presence with you: for these things are to be ascribed to him. All such previous workings and dispositions, you must say, they do all lay claim to a Divine author; such a wretch as I must lay claim to nothing that hath any the least appearance of good in it. And,

(3.) You are to consider for excitation and encouragement jointly, that this is the proper state of conflict wherein now you are; your present state is a conflicting state. You are with great and earnest contention of spirit to make your way to heaven and eternal life; it is the business of the state wherein you are; a state of probation, and a state of preparation for a final eternal state. Resolve upon doing suitable to your state. And consider,

(4.) That it will not last long. The time of trial will soon be over; rest, and enjoyment, and rejoicing, and triumph, will ensue. Conflict and fidelity therein to the death. Entertain yourselves with such pleasant words as those which have come from that mouth into which and by which all grace is poured, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved," Matt. xxiv. 13. "To him that overcometh shall be given to sit on my throne, as I have overcome, and am sat down with my Father on his throne," Rev. iii. 21. "He that overcometh shall be a pillar in the house of my God, and shall go no more out," Rev. iii. 12. "To him that overcometh shall be given the new name in the white stone, which none knoweth but he that hath it," Rev. iii. 17. "He that overcometh shall be fed with the heavenly manna. And he that overcometh shall inherit all things," Rev. ii. 17. Strive and labour now as one that designs and expects to overcome; and never fear you can be lost in so doing. It is unreasonable to fear a being lost in that only method which is prescribed for salvation. For, what? Do we think the blessed God hath prescribed inaptly, unsuitably, vainly, and with no accommodation or subserviency to the design for which he hath professedly prescribed it? And again,

(5.) As that which should excite you greatly, consider that the contest is for your souls; it is for eternal life; there is no giving out so long as you can say I am on this side eternity, my life is yet whole in me; I have this spirit, this soul, that was infused by the Almighty, yet in me; I am never to throw away this soul so long as I have it; so long as I find this spirit is in me, that inspiration of the Almighty that first gave me understanding. I am never to abandon this soul; and it is abandoned if you should throw away all hope; you can do nothing for your souls if there be no hope; despair binds up all rational endeavours. There is not one step more ever made, in order to salvation, after it becomes totally despaired of; that is an actual participation of hell. You put yourself into the infernal state too soon, and without warrant, while you have no pretence, no ground for it. Why should a man devilize himself, when God hath not done it? He doth distinguish your state from that of devils, why should you make it the same with them? There is no such thing as praying in hell; no such thing as supplication for mercy, or expectation of it; no possible expectation. Why should a man turn his present state into a final state, and that which is so accursedly final. Your present state is in order to another that admits of no change, and which can refer to none beyond it. And consider, too,

(6.) That your business lies with God, who is pleased to make himself known by most sweet and pleasant titles, —"The God of all grace,"—"God who is rich in mercy;" —and as by such a name as, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious, and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; though he will by no means clear the guilty;" that is, those that will have none of his mercy; they that by impertinency and infidelity bind down their own guilt upon their own souls, he will never clear them; but he is most ready (even from what he saith to be his nature) to receive returning souls, complying souls, those that are willing to take his way, and fall in with his methods; otherwise he must forego his own name, and no longer be called gracious, merciful, abundant in goodness. Will you not believe him when he protests and swears by his own life? "As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner, but that he return and live. Turn ye, turn ye, for why

will ye die, oh house of Israel?" Do you think that God trifles with men, when he bespeaks them at this rate? Do not these words carry a signification with them, the most pleasant, the most emphatical that can be thought, to any soul that is inclined to turn to him? They import nothing of encouragement to those that will not turn, or to them that securely and resolvedly go on in the way of their own hearts, otherwise than as they do still invite their return: but supposing no returning disposition, there are other words that speak the mind of God towards that other sort of men "He will wound the hairy scalp of them that go on still in their trespasses," Ps. lxviii. 21. "He is angry with the wicked every day," Ps. vii. 11. "He rains snares upon them, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest. This is the portion of their cup," Ps. xi. 6. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." So he represents himself towards them who are resolved to continue the contest with him, and will "rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler," Job xv. 21. But if any will take hold of his strength, and make peace with him, they shall make peace, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. Fury is not in him, but though he can easily, as a devouring fire, burn up briars and thorns, yet if any will take hold of his strength, and make peace with him, they shall make peace. This is God-like, this is suitable to his present nature, every way suitable to the perfection of the Deity. Consider with what a God you have to do: you have no cause to fear having to do with such a God, as will not let you be lost and perish finally: you have no cause to fear that he will, when you find in your heart a disposition to comply with him, and a desire to do so; fain I would do so, fain I would be what he would have me be, and do what he would have me do. It is a blasphemy against the Divine goodness, against the very nature of God, to suppose that he will throw away a soul that so inclines towards him. And,

7. It is against the express word of Christ to suppose that he will let such a soul be lost. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37. And what? will you not believe him? What cause did he ever give you to disbelieve him? To whom did he ever show himself guileful or apt to deceive? He that came into this world, full of grace and truth, how horrid is it to take up a suspicious thought of him! And lastly, consider,

8. That it is not only contrary to his word, but it is contrary to his nature and design, to let such a soul miscarry, be lost and perish in his sight, and under his eye, that desires to comply with the methods that he hath prescribed in his Gospel. It is against his nature, his nature is expressed by the divine name which is in him; "My name is in him," as we are told by God himself, concerning Christ, the great Angel of the covenant. Exod. xxiii. 21. "Provoke him not, for my name is in him." And what is God's name? The Lord, the Lord God, gracious,—as you heard before. My name is in him, that is, my very nature is in him, whereof that name is expressive.

And it is contrary to his design: for what? do you think he came on purpose into this world to save sinners, and yet to let them be lost, when they are willing to take his prescribed way, and comply with his methods? How can it be so? What, is he not true to himself? Doth he not agree with himself? consist with himself? Hath he forgotten what he died for, what he took human nature for, and what he hung upon an ignominious cross for? All the difficulties he had to contend with for the saving of souls are all overcome and over already. He is to be scourged no more, buffeted no more, crucified no more, to be in travail for souls, and in agonies under the divine anger no more, he hath done all that was toilsome, laborious, and painful, borne all that was grievous and bitter; he hath nothing now to do but what is pleasant work, to emit the influences of life and grace to craving and desiring souls; and so he will do, if the desires of our souls be indeed towards him; he cannot forego himself, and quit his own design; he was so intent upon that design of saving, as to run through the greatest difficulties imaginable; all the terrors of death, and all the powers of hell and darkness, could not stand in his way; no, he would make through them all to save souls. Will he then let yours be lost, when you are crying after him, and reaching towards him, to put yourselves into the hands and arms of his saving mercy? It cannot be.

And so as I have shown how reasonable it is to hope, I shall (God willing) the next time take a text on purpose to show you how necessary it is to hope; that as from what has been said, you may understand somewhat of the ground of hope in this case, (for you are not to hope without ground,) so you may understand somewhat of the great importance of hope in it too. I shall therefore next (God willing) make it my business to show of how mighty influence hope is, towards bringing about that great work which is to be done upon souls, in order to their eternal well-being.

SERMON XIV.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I did let you know the last time, that I intended to speak on these words; that as I had shown you what ground there is of hope for solicitous, awakened souls, that they shall not finally be lost; so they might from thence see of what importance it is to them to hope that they shall be saved. Their very salvation itself depends very greatly upon their hope of it. If there should be any here (which God forbid!) to whom salvation itself is a little thing, the hopes of it cannot but be less. If there should be any with whom it is inconsiderable, and who do not use to trouble their thoughts with any such matter, whether they be saved or not saved; the hope of being saved cannot with such, but by consequence, be very inconsiderable; a thing that will weigh very little with them.

But for such whom God hath awakened, and made to bestir themselves, such as are afraid of perishing, and to whom destruction from the Almighty is a terror, such whose hearts tremble within them, to think of any possibility or hazard that they may yet be lost under a Gospel of salvation; to such (methinks) these words should carry a grateful reviving sound.

And as they must be supposed to have this their wont, to revive this great question upon their minds, and be at it upon their hearts; What (oh what!) shall I do that I may be saved! Methinks it should be grateful to them to have so apposite and present an answer to their question,—why, you are to be saved by hope. The hope of being saved must do something to save you.

We know by common experience, that hope is that mighty powerful engine, which moves all the intelligent world, and rules and governs the whole frame and course of rational nature every where; so as that no design is driven on, no undertaking ever set on foot, but as men are influenced and led on by hope. In reference to any thing whereof they have no hope, they sit still and do nothing.

And as it is so in reference to common affairs, it would be proportionably so too, in reference to the affairs of our salvation, if this great engine, which is planted in the very soul of every man, were but rightly and duly managed and turned this way. And so much the more effectual it must be, and work with so much the more energy, by how much the more its ground is better and firmer, in reference to those affairs that do relate to our souls, and to our final salvation. God hath set no such connexion between the most earnest endeavours and answerable success, with reference to external and secular affairs. He hath given men no ground to be confident, that if they labour to be rich, they shall be rich; if they labour to be great and honourable in the world, they shall be so; but he hath given sufficient ground to be confident, that no man that seriously mindeth and manageth the affairs relating to his salvation, shall be lost. Therefore, whereas in reference to other affairs, hope is the *causa sine qua non*, here it is the *causa sine qua non et cum qua*; that is, in reference to other

* Preached May 17th, 1691.

affairs, hope is the principle, without which nothing could be done or attempted; but in reference to those affairs that relate to our final and eternal well-being, not only the attempt, but a good issue, will ensue upon the use of a true hope.

And that is it therefore which I design to insist on from this scripture; That is, to show you, (which you must take for the ground of our discourse,)

Doctrine. That whosoever are finally saved, are saved by hope. And in speaking to this I shall show,

1. What this hope is, of which this is said.

2. What influence it hath towards our salvation.

1. What this hope is. It would be a very useless thing to discourse philosophically to you about hope in general; which every one doth better understand by feeling, by the sensation he hath of it in his own mind, than he could do by the most accurate definition of a philosopher. It is easy to be collected what hope in general is, by considering the nature of man, and his present state, in comparison with one another. The nature of man makes him covet to be happy, and he finds his present state admits of no such thing; whereupon hope is that passion which must of course arise from such a complexion of the rational nature, and such a state of the common case of men. "It is that passion of the soul, by which it reaches forth itself to the uttermost, in the pursuit of somewhat that appears to be good, and likely to better its state, and that is attainable, possible to be attained, but not to be attained without difficulty." This is hope in general.

But when we have this account of hope in the general notion of it, we are yet to seek of what hope this is said, that it saves, that we are saved by it. We are sure this is not universally true of all hope. There is much hope in the world that signifies nothing to men's salvation; yea, much that signifies a great deal to their destruction. Many are not only lost, notwithstanding their hopes, but they are destroyed by them; they might have been safe and happy if they had had no such hope.

And therefore, what this hope is, concerning which this is said, we are more narrowly to inquire; and we do not find that the text itself doth suffice to give us a distinguishable account of it. It doth not assign its proper characters; it describes it no way, but only by its remote final issue,—We are saved by it.

But since it is manifest that all hope doth not save, and that much hope doth destroy, it is sufficiently intimated to us, that there must be somewhat very particular and distinguishing in the nature of that hope, to which this effect is ascribed, when we are told we are saved by it. It is intimated to us, that there is a hope that is saving. We must consider in what sense therefore hope may be said to be saving. It is in a two-fold sense that hope may admit to have this said of it, in opposition to such hope of which it cannot be said.

1. As salvation hath a certain connexion with it. There is a hope with which it hath a certain connexion; a hope true at first, and which therefore continues, and which being continued, doth terminate upon salvation, and takes hold of it, as all of a piece with it. "Gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter i. 13. When we are there told of "receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls;" (verse 9.) and are told of "them that believe, to the saving of the soul;" (Heb. x. last verse;) we find this believing, or that faith, described in the very next words, (Heb. xi. 1.) "to be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" so that faith and hope (we may show you hereafter with what difference) have their exercise upon one and the same object, till they actually end in salvation, with which therefore they have a firm and immediate connexion; even as a thing hath with itself; as that which is begun, and is yet imperfect, has with the same thing having arrived to its consummate and perfect state. But then,

2. Hope may be said also to be saving, not where it hath an immediate connexion only with salvation, but where also it hath a leadingness and tendency thereunto, though that effect may not certainly ensue. And accordingly there must be a two-fold hope. There is a hope that we are to reckon an effect of the Spirit of holiness, a real part of the new creature, a divine production in the soul. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13. There is such a hope as that; and there is also a rational human hope, which may have its exercise about the same thing, about the same final object, and about many things that lie intermediate thereunto, as means for the attaining of it; and which, being assisted by the common grace of the Spirit, may end in the former hope, and consequently in salvation. Now it is the former hope that must be aimed at, and for this latter hope it is neither to be rejected nor rested in. It is not to be rejected—A rational human hope, as such, when it is employed about divine objects, while we have no more in us, if any have nothing more, yet in him; this he ought not to reject, nor ought he to rest in it by any means; but labour to cherish it as an improvable thing, as that which by the influence and operation of the Divine Spirit falling in, may be heightened and raised up into that which shall be certainly saving hope; or the hope that shall be in immediate next connexion with salvation. And both these are very distinguishable from the hope that hath no tendency to save, but hath a most direct aptitude in it to destroy, ruin, and undo souls for ever. They are both of them very distinguishable from that. And to speak a little more particularly, I shall therefore here,

1. Show you what hope it is that hath not this tendency, and is not like to have this end of saving. And,

2. Then shall show you what it is.

1. What hope is not saving? It is not that which is quite wrong and false, both as to its object, and as to its ground; or in reference to the one or the other of these. Take them distinctively, that hope which is wrong, either as to its object or as to its ground, is none of the hope that hath any tendency to the saving of us.

1. If it be wrong as to its object, its material object, the thing we hope for; if that be quite alien, and of another kind from the business of our salvation, and final felicity, it can contribute nothing thereto: all that hope wherein the minds of men do go besides the proper business, and run into things of quite another kind: it is plain that hope can do a man no good, in order to his being saved. That hope whereof the object is a worldly felicity, or prosperity, whether it be for oneself, or whether it be the felicity or prosperity of any party of men in secular respects, to which he hath thought fit to adjoin himself, and to make one with: this can signify nothing, it is plain, to the saving of him. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. This hope doth not only not save, but it destroys, carnalizes men's minds, habituateth them to this earth, and transforms them into the image of it. And do men think to carry a piece of earth with them up into heaven, when that is all their hope terminateth upon, or is concerned about? No; this is so far from helping to their salvation, that it hurts and hinders all that can be. It is by such an inclination of mind as this, that men run themselves into snares and temptations, and come at length to be drowned in perdition and destruction, 1 Tim. vi. 9. The root of all evil is that very desire that is twisted into this hope. And suppose it be a good state of things in this world, from any community or party to which they have adjoined themselves, so as that their minds and hopes fly no higher, but only that things may go well with them and their party, here in an earthly state. This signifies as little to final, eternal salvation: yea, though the party and design be never so right with which any such have united themselves. It is very true, it is no unlawful thing, yea, it is a highly commendable thing, a praiseworthy thing, to have one's mind very much concerned and taken up about the prosperity and success of a just cause, of a good and honest interest in this world, supposing these two things be provided against.

(1.) That we do not mind and employ our thoughts and hopes about things of that nature finally and terminatively, so as to exclude the great things of the other world, and that last end that runs into eternity. An everlasting felicity to ourselves and the church of God, wherein he is to have out of us, and from all, his entire, complete, and consummate glory. Supposing that the intention of our minds

and thoughts, and the exercises of our hopes about these temporary things, do not exclude and shut out their higher and more vigorous exercise, proportionably to the higher excellency of the things themselves, about these superior things. Supposing that in the first place. And,

(2.) Supposing too, that we do not so mind such concernments, as thereby to debase and weaken religion. It is a very usual thing, and hardly to be avoided, and which is actually avoided (I doubt) but by a few, where there is a complication of secular interests and religious interests, together with one another, so to let our minds be involved and run into the one as to look off from the other. And thereby in that very complication, religion suffers, 1st, A debasement; and 2nd, A defilement, an enfeeblement; it is made a weak thing first, and thereupon a feeble and impotent thing. But how few are there in the world that do mind the concernments of it, in reference to the concernments of another world; and that do exercise their thoughts about its present concernments with a universalized mind, a truly enlarged mind, that takes in the interests of God and Christ as the main thing, and the interests of men as men, and of Christians as Christians, under a common notion! But how mean is it, and debasing to the spirit of a man, and how enfeebling to religion itself, when all the intention of men's souls runs about the little separate interests of this or that party, even as it is such, without considering the reference of things to God and the Redeemer! It is this that hath made religion a mean, sordid, terrene, and earthly thing. A political religion is that which, of all things, I cannot but consider with dread, according as I find verging, degenerating, and declining more and more into that. Let each orb be kept apart, and distinct from one another; and religion for the proper ends and purposes of religion, to refine men's minds, to bring them nearer to God, to make them capable of his converse and enjoyment, and to fit them for a blessed eternity. Let religion do its own work as such; and let all secular concernments be only minded in subserviency hereto, as they serve to promote the interest of such religion, as is really worthy the name, and will do the work of religion. But in the mean time, hopes that do fill the minds of men with thoughts about, whether their own private, or more common and public secular affairs, so as to eat up the thoughts of heaven, and to emasculate the strength and vigour of their spirits, that should work thitherward; all these hopes signify no more than a dream towards their salvation; and have no more reference to it, but to prejudice and to hinder our pursuit of it, and our final attaining of it. And,

2. Suppose that hope be placed on salvation itself, (and certainly that hope must subserve to salvation, must be the hope of salvation, as it is called, 1 Thess. v. 8.) yet if the ground of it be wrong, it can signify nothing to this end. If a man hope to be saved upon no ground that will bear the burden of such a hope, or that can rationally support it. That is,

(1.) If men do hope in themselves, if they hope to be saved from their own worthiness, through the apprehensions they have, whether of their own excellency, or if it be but of their own innocency; here is a hope that will betray them to perdition, while it is with them the hope of salvation. Or again,

(2.) If they hope in Christ, but not upon his terms. Many are very full of hopes that they shall be saved; and confess themselves to be sinners, and pretend to despair of being saved for their own sakes, or upon their own account; but it must be for Christ's sake, and upon his account. But then they hope for it upon none of his terms: as if a man hope to be saved by Christ, without ever being made holy by him. "He that hath this hope, purifieth himself," 1 John iii. 3. It must be a hope right, first, as to its end, as to its final object; that is, a hope of seeing God as he is: and then right as to the way; that is, of being made like him, as that which only can agree with such a vision, or make the soul capable of it. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one that hath this hope in him, (it may well enough be understood of Christ, to have reference to him,) purifies himself, as he is pure:" that hope, it will attemper the soul to the final object. It is exercised and taken up about a state wherein men are to be like God, upon their seeing of him as he is; "every one that hath this hope, purifies himself." It drains the soul from terrene dross, and from every thing that is defiling and impure: a man cannot converse with so glorious objects but by a hope that carries (as it were) a primitive power and property with it; for it is by hope that we do enjoy the object hoped for at a distance. This, I say, cannot be, but that objects will impress their image, and beget somewhat like themselves in the soul. The soul that is directed and carried, by the power of its own expectation, to a continual converse with God, as him whom he expects to see as he is, and to be made perfectly like him, by the power of this hope, it will be growing liker and liker to him, and will be purifying itself as he is pure. But he that hopes to be saved, without ever undergoing any such change in the present temper of his spirit, he that hopes to be saved without ever being regenerate, he that hopes to be saved against the plain word of Christ, is so far from hoping upon his terms, that he doth hope against the terms which he hath expressly laid down in the Gospel; whereas he hath said in his Gospel, "Except a man be born again," (John iii. 5.) except a man be regenerate, born from above, (as the word admits to be read,) he can never see, or enter into the kingdom of God. Yet I will hope that I shall enter into that kingdom, and possess that kingdom, though I never be regenerate, though I remain the same man I was all my days.

And whereas Christ hath said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," (Luke xiii. 3.) yet men will hope they shall be saved, though they never repent. And whereas Christ hath said, they that believe "shall not perish, but have everlasting life," (John iii. 16.) they will yet hope to be saved without Gospel faith; and that, notwithstanding the Gospel itself so expressly saith, "He that believeth not shall be damned;" (Mark xvi. 16.) "he that believeth not is condemned already;" (John iii. 18.) "he that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 36. And whereas, again, the word of the Gospel hath said that Christ will be the "author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him," (Heb. v. 9.) men will yet hope that he shall be to them the author of eternal salvation, though they continually disobey him, and live in affronts to him, to his known laws, and the sceptre of his government; and that, also, notwithstanding he hath so expressly said that Christ will "come in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon all that obey not his Gospel," 2 Thess. i. 8. Such as do hope for salvation by Christ altogether without ground, are never to think that that hope will save them, but betray them into perdition, or, at length, be the very instrument of a self-destruction to them; their own instrument, and of their own destruction. This is a hope that will never save, but will do more to destroy than to save them. That hope, that is first totally wrong in its object; and, secondly, is altogether without ground, be the object what it will, yet it rests upon no ground that can sustain such a hope. But then,

2. We shall briefly show what the hope must be that hath this tendency to save; hath (at least) a tendency to it. It must,

(1.) Be a hope rightly terminated as to its object. As I told you before, it must be the hope of salvation, which is said to be that part of the spiritual armour, which is thought fit to be expressed by the name of a helmet. The helmet is to defend the head. You all know the head is the seat of design, where projects are formed, where counsels are laid. Now no man (as you heard before) designs for that of which he hath no hope; that confounds all designs. If a man hath formed in his head never so specious models; when once any thing appears in view which shows the whole business to be impracticable, so as there is no hope of succeeding, all those models are confounded and lost; there is an end of them. Therefore, there needs a helmet to protect the head, the seat of counsels and designs. And this is that which doth it,—"the hope of salvation." If there be a firm, well-laid hope of salvation, this keeps the mind clear, and in a composed posture, ready still for deliberation, and to contrive the way, and course, and method, that may best serve on the one hand; and to countermine whatsoever may obstruct, and hinder in the prosecution of it, on the other hand. This hope

must have for its final object the divine glory and likeness, as that which we are to behold, as that which we are to bear, as that into which we are to be transformed; as above in this chapter; "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." And it is the hope of this that saves, taking in the other requisites, of which you will hear more hereafter. So, (Rom. v. 1, 2.) "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope"—of what?—"of the glory of God." The great thing that terminates this hope must be "salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, with eternal glory." As the apostle conjoins the private and positive expressions there; whereas, when there is no such conjunction, either put alone serves for both, when a man's hope is pitched upon this final term and end; that (as was intimated before) draws his heart, and keeps it under the transforming influence of the object which the Divine Spirit accompanies. The Divine Spirit doth the transforming work, even at first, and progressively afterwards; but it doth it by objects, by glorious objects, by objects blending in the Gospel. We are first changed, and continually "changed into the same image, from glory to glory;" but it is "by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. last verse. And then,

(2.) This hope must be right as to its ground, as well as in reference to its object; and that can be nothing else but the covenant of God in Christ,—God in Christ to be apprehended and closed with in a covenant; or, as he is pleased to give a sinner the advantage of taking hold of him, as he hath brought himself under the bonds of a covenant. I will be such and such to you; my Son shall be such and such to you. I engage in a covenant: it shall be so, if you take hold. Here is the only firm, secure ground of such a hope; and this is that which the soul actually must do, or must (at least) be actually designing to do: and accordingly may its hope be either certainly saving, or have a leadingness and tendency thereunto, as was told you before. If the heart can bear record in the sight of God, I have taken hold of the Gospel covenant, and therein of God in Christ upon Gospel terms, my heart regretting nothing of them; but readily, and with good liking, falling in with every thing; then I have that hope in me, that, while it lasts, is a piece of salvation; salvation and it are of a piece.

But suppose I am not arrived to that pitch yet, that I dare avow it before the Lord, that I have come to such a closure; I am not sure of the sincerity of my own heart; yet, if this be the thing I design, I abandon all other hopes, and all other grounds of hope; and this is that I am aiming and driving at, to come to a sincere closure with God in Christ upon the terms of the Gospel. I do not yet know whether I am come up to it fully or not: but I am aiming at it, making towards it as I can. This, even this is saving hope, in one of the senses before explained; that is, as having a tendency and leadingness to salvation; and which, as it is not to be rested in till it come to a plerophery; so, nor is it to be rejected neither; it is to be cherished and complied with. God may make somewhat of this more trembling hope, though my anchor be not yet so firmly cast within the veil, or I do not know that it is; while I yet abandon and renounce all other hopes, and look to be saved in no other way, and am aiming to be saved in this way, it is a good sign, for there can be no aim without some hope; total despair throweth you off from every thing of endeavour, and every thing of design, for heaven and eternity; gives you up to perish, and delivers you up to eternal perdition. But while you cannot say your hope is saving, as that which will certainly save you at last, yet it may be said to be saving while it is tending towards a state of salvation, and carrying your hearts forwards towards that state. And this account, that is, that though you are not sure you have actually built upon the proper ground, yet you have the proper ground in view before you, and there you design to build, and you will build no where else. Why all this, while there is that hope which hath a leadingness and tendency to salvation, and which ought to be cherished, that it may save. When it is so far (as hath been said) right, as to its object, and when it is so far designedly right, as to its ground. This, in the one sense or the other, is the thing whereof the text speaks; "We are saved by hope." Then,

2. The second thing is, to show the influence that such hope hath upon, and towards salvation; and that would be very easy to show you by representing to you what it is that is necessary to salvation; or what are the certain characters of the saved ones. They do make a select community, distinct from all the rest of the world. The nations of them that are saved, (as they are called Rev. xxi. 24.) they are all gathered into that city of God; they make a very distinct community from all the rest of the world; and must be understood to be distinguished from them by that which is characteristical of them that are saved ones. And so the distinction must consist in something or other that doth notify them to be the subjects of salvation. If it doth appear that such a hope be necessary to that, it must be concluded to be necessary to salvation too. That that is necessary for that which is necessary for salvation, is itself too necessary to salvation: *Causa causæ est causa causati;* do but agree what thing or things are necessary to salvation, and if hope have a necessary influence upon these things, it must itself be in the way to salvation also. And if it be productive of those things, it will be productive of salvation too; and not only be the cause without which salvation cannot be, but by which it will be.

Now it is very plain that these two things are necessary to salvation:

1. Thorough conversion; the bringing of a person into a state of grace:—And,

2. Continual perseverance therein unto the end. Both these are necessary to salvation. And if such hope as we have already in some measure described to you be necessary to both these, it must be necessary to salvation too. And that is it which, in future discourses, I shall labour to show you; that hope is necessary to conversion first, and then to perseverance. The soul's conversion; its turning to God in Christ, it is with hope; it is not the act of a despairing soul; it cannot be; it is no more possible for a despairing man than for a despairing devil to repent and turn to God, and to close with Christ. I do not speak of the difference of the law; that signifies nothing in this case; but I speak in reference to the complexion of the mind and spirit; and in respect of that, despair would as much keep a sinful man from turning to God through Christ, as it doth an apostate devil.

SERMON XV.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THAT which I proposed to you in discoursing to you from this passage was, 1st, to show what hope that is of which this is said, inasmuch as it is apparently not to be said of all hope. There is a hope that will not save. There is a hope that will destroy; and to that head we have already spoken. We have shown you what hope it is not; and then have positively showed you what hope it is, concerning which this is spoken, that it saves. And now,

2. Our further business is to show you which way hope doth operate towards salvation, or what influence it hath in order thereunto. We told you (entering on this head last time) that the understanding of this matter will depend upon our conceiving aright what is more immediately and certainly necessary to salvation; for if hope will be found to influence such things as are of most apparent confessed necessity unto salvation, it will be then found to have a necessary influence on salvation too. If it be necessary to that which is necessary, it must be itself also necessary. And it must be somewhat in itself exceeding great, and so that needs all the suitable and proper influences imaginable to bring it about, that shall distinguish them that are

* Preached May 26th, 1691.

saved from them who shall perish; or, in short, the things that are more immediately necessary to salvation, must be understood to be very great things, and things that are not to be wrought at an easy rate, but which will require the help and concurrence of whatsoever may have an apt subserviency thereto; for the differences of them that are to be saved from them that will be finally lost, must be understood to be fundamental to the eternal differences of heaven and hell. And think how vastly different are the states of men hereafter, who shall be plunged and sunk into an abyss of wo and misery to eternity, and of them who shall be eternally rejoicing and exulting in the highest and most perfect felicity and glory.

There is the embryo of heaven and hell in the very hearts of men on this side both; and therefore the differences must be vastly great, even here in this world, between them that are in a state of salvation and them that are not in that state. The inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, that comes down from heaven, they make up the community of them that are to be the saved ones, as was noted from that 21st chapter of Revelations, 24th verse; "The nations of them that are saved do walk in the light thereof." How vastly another sort of men, in all reason, are they to be from the rest of the perishing world, who are to be exempt from the common ruin, who, when the rest of the world must perish in vindictive flames, are to be caught up in the clouds, and meet their Redeemer in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord! How vast (I say) must we suppose the differences between these two sorts of men, when there is the seed, the very *primordia* of heaven and hell, the very beginnings of heaven and hell, to be found on earth in these two sorts of men! Therefore the distinction of the saved ones must be great and eminent from those that are not to be saved.

And what is their distinction I have generally told you already. It lies in these two things; in thorough regeneration, or conversion to God, by which they are brought into a good and safe state at first; and then, in their perseverance herein unto the end.

1. They are such as are "born from heaven,"—"from above;" and the expression (John iii. 3, 4.) may as well be read "born from above," as "born again;" they are a heaven-born sort of men; a community of persons that are all of a divine family,—of the family of God, to be the sons and daughters of the Most High; not by adoption only, as if their sonship were no more than a relative thing; but by regeneration too, which is a real thing, and which makes an internal subjective change, the greatest that can be wrought in this world upon the subject where it hath place. By that regenerating impression on them they are turned to God; a divine touch upon their spirits inclines them to him; and now they turn to him with all their hearts and with all their souls. By being turned they turn; passive conversion and regeneration are the same thing. That turning influence by which the whole soul is brought about towards God, is nothing else but the regenerating influence that puts a new nature into them; for it is not a violent turn, but a spontaneous turn; a turn from the inclination of that new nature that is now in them; and in respect of this communicated divine nature are they said to be "born of God," to be "children of the Most High;" or otherwise (as the same thing is elliptically expressed) "they are of God;"—"we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John v. 19.

2. And being brought into this state, they must persevere in it. It is absolutely necessary that they do so; "he that endureth to the end shall be saved," Matt. xxiv. 13. "They that are born of God must overcome the world;" which, indeed, some way or other, sums up all the enemy's power that they are to contend with; for the great destroyer of souls tempts men by this world, and their own flesh is tempted by it; so that, take one of that ternary of enemies, and you take them altogether. They cannot be severed; and he that is born of God must overcome these; in overcoming one, he must overcome all of this ternary of enemies, these adversary powers; and, overcoming, shall sit down with Christ on his throne, as he overcame, and is "sat down with his Father upon his throne." They are such, as, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honour, and glory, and immortality," till they actually "obtain everlasting life," Rom. ii. 7. And they are to continue believing, which sums up the whole of that duty which the Gospel makes necessary to salvation, till they actually receive "the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls," 1 Peter i. 9. "They must not be of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of their souls," Heb. x. last verse.

Both these are of most absolute necessity to being saved. This is plain, and out of all question; and they are necessary to salvation two ways, both of them, as in their own nature they do dispose and suit the soul for the heavenly state; both for the work, and for the felicity of it. If it were possible that one should come unchanged, unconverted, and unrenewed into heaven, what an exotic thing would he be there? He could have no business there; there is nothing there to be done that he could do; there is nothing there to be enjoyed that he could enjoy. Suppose one in heaven, that were no lover of God, that can take no pleasure in the Divine presence, that hath nothing in him of the Divine image, what could he do there? And if we could suppose the wisdom of heaven to do so inapt a thing as to admit him thither, to what purpose would it be? Therefore, upon the account of internal, subjective qualification, both these are necessary.

1. There must be a new nature given, that such a one be regenerate, born of God, turned unto him with the whole heart and soul. And that there be a new creation raised up in him, to attemper and suit him to the heavenly state; that is, that there be (as it were) the epitome of a new world, new heavens, and a new earth, in that soul which is designed for that blessed state above. A new creation is to rise up, which is to top heaven, to wit, to lift up its head into heaven, and a blessed eternity. That work is to be wrought in him that is a congenerous thing unto heaven; "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, (saith our Lord,) shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into eternal life," John iv. 14. The regenerate frame and nature is so much akin to heaven, that in nature and kind they are not different things; and so there can no man ever come into heaven, that hath not somewhat of heaven aforehand come into him. He must have the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, within him, which consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, (Rom. xiv.) which are the very *primordia* of heaven: righteousness, universal rectitude; and peace, universal tranquillity resulting from most perfect and unexceptionable order; and then joy in the Holy Ghost, that state now taking place, that consists of "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. last verse. All these together are inchoate heaven, and so must, in the work of regeneration and conversion, be inwrought into the soul, to prepare and qualify it internally and subjectively for salvation, or the heavenly state, which is all one. And then,

2. Perseverance is equally necessary upon the same account, and for the same purpose, under that very notion; for, if it were necessary that such a thing should be, to qualify such and such as subjects for the heavenly state, it must be, for the same reason, necessary to continue and remain. This seed of regeneration must abide; it must continue even to the very last; for the soul is not qualified for the heavenly state by what it was ten or twenty years ago, but by what it is when it comes into it; when it comes actually to possess it, and partake of it.

And then, both these are necessary, not only in the nature of the thing, as internal qualifications of the subject; but they are also necessary as things required by the tenor of the evangelical law of grace, which entitleth none to heaven but those that are regenerate; those that are born of God; and those that, being so, do continue adhering and cleaving to him to the very end; that is, those (as was said before) who do believe in the very saving of their souls.

And you must consider here, that this second necessity of both these things, arising from the Gospel constitution, or the constitution of the evangelical covenant, or the law of grace, it comes in this kind to supervene and to be superadded to the other; to wit, considering salvation at length as the effect of the Gospel grant; for it is not merely to be looked upon as a natural product, (though

you say spiritually natural, or you mean so, it is not to be considered under that notion, (though it is partly to be considered under it,) but it is withal to be considered under the notion of a gift. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is not a mere natural product, nor the product of the divine nature, the spiritual, the holy nature, that is wrought into the soul. It is not (I say) merely such a natural production, but it is to be considered morally too, as the effect of a free donation. And being so a given thing, a thing conferred, then it must be understood to be conferred upon the donor's own terms, the terms that he chooseth, that he is pleased himself to enact and appoint. And these terms are those terms which I have told you of already; "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;"—"except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot be saved;" and (as was told you before) "he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." And the righteous Judge of all the world, "who will render to every man according to his works;" (Rom. ii 6.) "he hath determined this, that to them that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality," he will give "eternal life;" and for the rest, "to those that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath."

So far it was necessary to clear to you the immediate requisites to salvation, these two summarily, conversion and perseverance. And now, hereupon, I am to evince to you, that hope hath an influence upon both these; that a man would never turn to God if it were not from the influence of hope; and that being turned, he would never walk with God to the end, never cleave to God to the last, if it were not still from the influence of hope.

I hope you have all so much of Gospel understanding with you, as to think, that the asserting such and such a means as necessary, doth not make the end less necessary. We are not to suppose the end (eternal salvation) is less certain, because such means have a certain subserviency thereto; for he that hath appointed the end hath appointed the means too, and settled the connexion between them; that is, that there shall be such faith, such a new creature, such holiness; and these shall be continued and maintained till the end be attained; and the end shall be attained hereupon. The necessary subserviency of such means doth not make the end less certain; but more rationally certain, more certain to us, more evident to us, when we see the way chalked out more plainly that leads to it, and in which it is brought about. I say, that nothing is plainer, than that both these are brought about by the influence of hope; both the soul's first conversion and turning to God, and its continuance and perseverance to the end. And, that I may evince the influence of hope as to both these, with the more clearness, there is somewhat that I must premise to make my way the clearer thereto. That is,

1. That God, in his dealings with the souls of men in order to salvation, doth work very much upon a natural principle of self-love in them. I say, that in order to the saving of souls, God, in his dealing with them, doth very much apply himself to a principle of natural self-love. This is plain, and out of all question. And the precepts, with their sanctions, (the great instruments that he works and moves them by,) do all suppose it. The great Gospel precept, "believing in the Son of God," with its sanction admixt, doth plainly suppose it. "Go, preach this Gospel to every nation."—What is this for? In order to believing in general. What is the sanction annexed to this precept?—"He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." These are direct applications to the principle of self-love. What can either of these signify by way of argument, but as they do accommodate this principle, and are some way suited thereunto? What doth it weigh to tell such a one, You shall be saved if you believe with a true Gospel faith, if he do not love himself; if he have no love for his own soul? And what doth it weigh to tell such an one, If you do not believe you shall be damned, if he love not his own soul, if he care not what becomes of his soul? Nothing is plainer, than that God doth apply himself to the natural principle of self-love in us, when he comes to deal with us about the affairs of our salvation and eternal well-being. What are heaven and hell laid in open view before us for, in so much amiableness, and in so much terror, but to move this principle of self-love? And then I would premise,

2. Supposing the principle of self-love, the end that every one must design thereupon must suit and answer that principle. And thereupon it will be consequent, that he who is to be saved must be made to design his own salvation; which also the plainest and greatest Gospel principles do most significantly and manifestly hold forth to us as matter of indispensable duty; that is, that we are to design our own salvation; to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" what doth that signify else? what doth it signify less? "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure;"—"strive to enter in at the strait gate;" be ye in agonies in order to it; that is the English of that expression. If the principle of self-love is to be set on work; and if, from that principle, our own salvation is to be designed as our end; then it will be most apparently consequent, that the hope of attaining our end, must needs be the great influencing thing upon us, in reference to whatsoever is necessary thereunto. And so,

3. The whole business of conversion we must understand to be influenced by hope, upon the supposal that the person that now lies under the converting work, is all the while designing his own salvation. And here my business is, and will be, to let you see how the many things that are incident, and do fall in together in the business of a man's serious and thorough conversion and turning to God, must be understood to be influenced by hope throughout. The turning soul is, in its turning, a hoping soul, and would never turn if it did not hope; because it hopes, therefore it turns. The Divine Spirit works all, (it is true,) but it works accommodately and suitably to our nature, to the reasonable intelligent nature in which it works. Do but consider the plain and great things that are carried in this turning, when the soul hath received the impression, or doth now actually receive the impression from God that turns it; and see how manifest it is, that the influence of hope runs into every one. As,

(1.) In this turn wrought upon the soul there is conviction of sin, (as is obvious to every one,) accompanied many times with very great terrors, which have much participation even of hell in them, an affinity with it, a nearness to it. The soul in order to its being raised and brought as high as heaven, is first (as it were) dipped into hell, brought as near hell as it can come without being plunged and irrecoverably lost and swallowed up of it. And you must consider the soul as an apprehensive thing all the while. You must consider the Divine Spirit working upon an intelligent, rational subject, in this its descent. The soul descends with open eyes, and it descends with a kind of consent, let me go down and visit my own deserved portion and lot. It descends an apprehensive thing, an open-eyed thing, and voluntarily; there is a voluntariness in it; but that there could never be if there were no hope. I am content to go down and descend even to the very brink and verge of the infernal pit; but I go down with hope, that God will not plunge me in it; that he will not lose me, and let me be swallowed up there; even while it is beset with amazing terrors, they are not the terrors of total despair, then it were to be turned into a mere devil; total despair would make it so. But though there may be so great fear, the soul seems it may be, to itself, a composition of fear; there is, however, a secret influence of hope; though he shake me over hell, he will not throw me into it; he will, in mercy to my soul, "save me from going down into the pit:" while it is convinced, it hopes; and the more it hopes the more easily it admits of conviction: As vile a wretch as I am, as any representation could make me, I hope God will not utterly cast me off. The convictions that are accompanied with terror are not accompanied with hope; it is undespairing terror.

(2.) There is in this converting work deep and serious humiliation, which is a further thing than mere conviction of the evil of sin, and of the deserts of it; which hath for its seat and subject of it, the heart, a tender heart, a relenting heart, a broken, melting heart. This is carried in the work of conversion; but this can never be without hope. All the terror in the world will never melt a soul,

saved from them who shall perish; or, in short, the things that are more immediately necessary to salvation, must be understood to be very great things, and things that are not to be wrought at an easy rate, but which will require the help and concurrence of whatsoever may have an apt subserviency thereto; for the differences of them that are to be saved from them that will be finally lost, must be understood to be fundamental to the eternal differences of heaven and hell. And think how vastly different are the states of men hereafter, who shall be plunged and sunk into an abyss of wo and misery to eternity, and of them who shall be eternally rejoicing and exulting in the highest and most perfect felicity and glory.

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2. And being brought into this state, they must persevere in it. It is absolutely necessary that they do so; "he that endureth to the end shall be saved," Matt. xxiv. 13. "They that are born of God must overcome the world;" which, indeed, some way or other, sums up all the enemy's power that they are to contend with; for the great destroyer of souls tempts men by this world, and their own flesh is tempted by it; so that, take one of that ternary of enemies, and you take them altogether. They cannot be severed; and he that is born of God must overcome these; in overcoming one, he must overcome all of this ternary of enemies, these adversary powers; and, overcoming, shall sit down with Christ on his throne, as he overcame, and is "sat down with his Father upon his throne." They are such, as, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honour, and glory, and immortality," till they actually "obtain everlasting life," Rom. ii. 7. And they are to continue believing, which sums up the whole of that duty which the Gospel makes necessary to salvation, till they actually receive "the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls," 1 Peter i. 9. "They must not be of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of their souls," Heb. x. last verse.

Both these are of most absolute necessity to being saved. This is plain, and out of all question; and they are necessary to salvation two ways, both of them, as in their own nature they do dispose and suit the soul for the heavenly state; both for the work, and for the felicity of it. If it were possible that one should come unchanged, unconverted, and unrenewed into heaven, what an exotic thing would he be there? He could have no business there; there is nothing there to be done that he could do; there is nothing there to be enjoyed that he could enjoy. Suppose one in heaven, that were no lover of God, that can take no pleasure in the Divine presence, that hath nothing in him of the Divine image, what could he do there? And if we could suppose the wisdom of heaven to do so inapt a thing as to admit him thither, to what purpose would it be? Therefore, upon the account of internal, subjective qualification, both these are necessary.

1. There must be a new nature given, that such a one be regenerate, born of God, turned unto him with the whole heart and soul. And that there be a new creation raised up in him, to attemper and suit him to the heavenly state; that is, that there be (as it were) the epitome of a new world, new heavens, and a new earth, in that soul which is designed for that blessed state above. A new creation is to rise up, which is to top heaven, to wit, to lift up its head into heaven, and a blessed eternity. That work is to be wrought in him that is a congenerous thing unto heaven; "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, (saith our Lord,) shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into eternal life," John iv. 14. The regenerate frame and nature is so much akin to heaven, that in nature and kind they are not different things; and so there can no man ever come into heaven, that hath not somewhat of heaven aforehand come into him. He must have the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, within him, which consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, (Rom. xiv.) which are the very *primordia* of heaven: righteousness, universal rectitude; and peace, universal tranquillity resulting from most perfect and unexceptionable order; and then joy in the Holy Ghost, that state now taking place, that consists of "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. last verse. All these together are inchoate heaven, and so must, in the work of regeneration and conversion, be inwrought into the soul, to prepare and qualify it internally and subjectively for salvation, or the heavenly state, which is all one. And then,

2. Perseverance is equally necessary upon the same account, and for the same purpose, under that very notion; for, if it were necessary that such a thing should be, to qualify such and such as subjects for the heavenly state, it must be, for the same reason, necessary to continue and remain. This seed of regeneration must abide; it must continue even to the very last; for the soul is not qualified for the heavenly state by what it was ten or twenty years ago, but by what it is when it comes into it; when it comes actually to possess it, and partake of it.

And then, both these are necessary, not only in the nature of the thing, as internal qualifications of the subject; but they are also necessary as things required by the tenor of the evangelical law of grace, which entitleth none to heaven but those that are regenerate; those that are born of God; and those that, being so, do continue adhering and cleaving to him to the very end; that is, those (as was said before) who do believe in the very saving of their souls.

And you must consider here, that this second necessity of both these things, arising from the Gospel constitution, or the constitution of the evangelical covenant, or the law of grace, it comes in this kind to supervene and to be superadded to the other; to wit, considering salvation at length as the effect of the Gospel grant; for it is not merely to be looked upon as a natural product, (though

you say spiritually natural, or you mean so, it is not to be considered under that notion, (though it is partly to be considered under it,) but it is withal to be considered under the notion of a gift. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is not a mere natural product, nor the product of the divine nature, the spiritual, the holy nature, that is wrought into the soul. It is not (I say) merely such a natural production, but it is to be considered morally too, as the effect of a free donation. And being so a given thing, a thing conferred, then it must be understood to be conferred upon the donor's own terms, the terms that he chooseth, that he is pleased himself to enact and appoint. And these terms are those terms which I have told you of already; "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;"—"except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot be saved;" and (as was told you before) "he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." And the righteous Judge of all the world, "who will render to every man according to his works;" (Rom. ii 6.) "he hath determined this, that to them that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality," he will give "eternal life;" and for the rest, "to those that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath."

So far it was necessary to clear to you the immediate requisites to salvation, these two summarily, conversion and perseverance. And now, hereupon, I am to evince to you, that hope hath an influence upon both these; that a man would never turn to God if it were not from the influence of hope; and that being turned, he would never walk with God to the end, never cleave to God to the last, if it were not still from the influence of hope.

I hope you have all so much of Gospel understanding with you, as to think, that the asserting such and such a means as necessary, doth not make the end less necessary. We are not to suppose the end (eternal salvation) is less certain, because such means have a certain subserviency thereto; for he that hath appointed the end hath appointed the means too, and settled the connexion between them; that is, that there shall be such faith, such a new creature, such holiness; and these shall be continued and maintained till the end be attained; and the end shall be attained hereupon. The necessary subserviency of such means doth not make the end less certain; but more rationally certain, more certain to us, more evident to us, when we see the way chalked out more plainly that leads to it, and in which it is brought about. I say, that nothing is plainer, than that both these are brought about by the influence of hope; both the soul's first conversion and turning to God, and its continuance and perseverance to the end. And, that I may evince the influence of hope as to both these, with the more clearness, there is somewhat that I must premise to make my way the clearer thereto. That is,

1. That God, in his dealings with the souls of men in order to salvation, doth work very much upon a natural principle of self-love in them. I say, that in order to the saving of souls, God, in his dealing with them, doth very much apply himself to a principle of natural self-love. This is plain, and out of all question. And the precepts, with their sanctions, (the great instruments that he works and moves them by,) do all suppose it. The great Gospel precept, "believing in the Son of God," with its sanction admixt, doth plainly suppose it. "Go, preach this Gospel to every nation."—What is this for? In order to believing in general. What is the sanction annexed to this precept?—"He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." These are direct applications to the principle of self-love. What can either of these signify by way of argument, but as they do accommodate this principle, and are some way suited thereunto? What doth it weigh to tell such a one, You shall be saved if you believe with a true Gospel faith, if he do not love himself; if he have no love for his own soul? And what doth it weigh to tell such an one, If you do not believe you shall be damned, if he love not his own soul, if he care not what becomes of his soul? Nothing is plainer, than that God doth apply himself to the natural principle of self-love in us, when he comes to deal with us about the affairs of our salvation and eternal well-being. What are heaven and hell laid in open view before us for, in so much amiableness, and in so much terror, but to move this principle of self-love? And then I would premise,

2. Supposing the principle of self-love, the end that every one must design thereupon must suit and answer that principle. And thereupon it will be consequent, that he who is to be saved must be made to design his own salvation; which also the plainest and greatest Gospel principles do most significantly and manifestly hold forth to us as matter of indispensable duty; that is, that we are to design our own salvation; to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" what doth that signify else? what doth it signify less? "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure;"—"strive to enter in at the strait gate;" be ye in agonies in order to it; that is the English of that expression. If the principle of self-love is to be set on work; and if, from that principle, our own salvation is to be designed as our end; then it will be most apparently consequent, that the hope of attaining our end, must needs be the great influencing thing upon us, in reference to whatsoever is necessary thereunto. And so,

3. The whole business of conversion we must understand to be influenced by hope, upon the supposal that the person that now lies under the converting work, is all the while designing his own salvation. And here my business is, and will be, to let you see how the many things that are incident, and do fall in together in the business of a man's serious and thorough conversion and turning to God, must be understood to be influenced by hope throughout. The turning soul is, in its turning, a hoping soul, and would never turn if it did not hope; because it hopes, therefore it turns. The Divine Spirit works all, (it is true,) but it works accommodately and suitably to our nature, to the reasonable intelligent nature in which it works. Do but consider the plain and great things that are carried in this turning, when the soul hath received the impression, or doth now actually receive the impression from God that turns it; and see how manifest it is, that the influence of hope runs into every one. As,

(1.) In this turn wrought upon the soul there is conviction of sin, (as is obvious to every one,) accompanied many times with very great terrors, which have much participation even of hell in them, an affinity with it, a nearness to it. The soul in order to its being raised and brought as high as heaven, is first (as it were) dipped into hell, brought as near hell as it can come without being plunged and irrecoverably lost and swallowed up of it. And you must consider the soul as an apprehensive thing all the while. You must consider the Divine Spirit working upon an intelligent, rational subject, in this its descent. The soul descends with open eyes, and it descends with a kind of consent, let me go down and visit my own deserved portion and lot. It descends an apprehensive thing, an open-eyed thing, and voluntarily; there is a voluntariness in it; but that there could never be if there were no hope. I am content to go down and descend even to the very brink and verge of the infernal pit; but I go down with hope, that God will not plunge me in it; that he will not lose me, and let me be swallowed up there; even while it is beset with amazing terrors, they are not the terrors of total despair, then it were to be turned into a mere devil; total despair would make it so. But though there may be so great fear, the soul seems it may be, to itself, a composition of fear; there is, however, a secret influence of hope; though he shake me over hell, he will not throw me into it; he will, in mercy to my soul, "save me from going down into the pit:" while it is convinced, it hopes; and the more it hopes the more easily it admits of conviction: As vile a wretch as I am, as any representation could make me, I hope God will not utterly cast me off. The convictions that are accompanied with terror are not accompanied with hope; it is undespairing terror.

(2.) There is in this converting work deep and serious humiliation, which is a further thing than mere conviction of the evil of sin, and of the deserts of it; which hath for its seat and subject of it, the heart, a tender heart, a relenting heart, a broken, melting heart. This is carried in the work of conversion; but this can never be without hope. All the terror in the world will never melt a soul,

but hope will. Hope makes it to dissolve, makes it to relent; he puts his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope, Lam. iii. 29. Is there hope for me?—then I care not how low I lie; then let me humble myself to the lowest that is possible at the footstool of the mercy-seat; for I see there is hope for me. Despair would harden the heart, and render it as a rock, impenetrable, inflexible. But hope makes it to melt and dissolve. There is the greatest horror (to be sure) in hell itself, where there is the most absolute perfect despair; and so that fire, even the fire of the infernal pit, that scorches, that enrages, that exasperates, that enflames the soul with enmity, malignity, and hatred against the very Author of its being. But it is another kind of fire that melts. Hell fire will scorch, but it will not melt. It is the spirit of divine love in the Gospel that only melts; and if it melts it gives ground of hope, as God is revealed reconcileable and willing to be at peace. When the Gospel saith so, and the Spirit breathes in that Gospel, and declares to the soul immediately, God is reconcileable; now is the heart clothed with shame and confusion, and lies low in self-abasement, even to the very lowest it can lay itself; "that thou mayest be ashamed and confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord," Ezek. xvi. latter end. That is, when I have shown thee how willing I am to be reconciled, revealed myself so pacifiable, reconcileable, and given thee hope of pardon, mercy, and grace, then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I have discovered myself so placable towards thee, and so willing to be reconciled. And again,

(3.) There is in this converting work, a mortification endured and undergone, even of the most connatural corruptions and evil inclinations. The soul endures the cutting off the right hand and the right foot, and putting out the right eye; and submits to the command, *Ure, Seca*, as that Father is brought in saying, Lord, burn me, wound me, cut me, so thou wilt but save me! I matter it not. What? cutting off the right hands and feet, and plucking out the right eyes?—this would never be endured if it were not for hope. Here is in this turn a denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts whatsoever, under the instruction of grace, under the instruction of *that* grace, which appears bringing salvation, and that teaches us this denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts. And how, and in what way?—"Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." While I yield and submit to such things as these, to be pulled away from all ungodliness, and to have all my worldly lusts torn from me, it is in the contemplation of that blessed hope. Oh, how comfortably shall I behold Christ, and will he behold me, who have endured all this for his pleasure! The pleasures of sin are abandoned, which are but for a season. And why?—Because there is an eye had to the recompense of the reward; and because that faith begins now to take hold of the soul, that is, "the substance of things hoped for," Heb. xi. 1. compared with what is mentioned in the 26th and 27th verses. And again,

(4.) There is in this work of conversion a forsaking of all the world; that is the term the soul turns from, when God is the term it turns unto; a forsaking of all this world, as a most despicable thing, a composition of idols; and what have I to do with idols? saith the turning, the returning soul. What have I any more to do with them? "Love not the world, nor the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. And what can make a man abandon a thing he hath loved, but the hope of a better?—I shall meet with something better, something that will be a rich compensation for all that I abandon and throw away. We find those converts to whom the apostle Peter writes his first epistle, that they were thrown out of all for Christ and the Gospel's sake; elect strangers, scattered throughout the several quarters of Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, and wherever else scattered they were; driven from their own home and inheritance. And how came they to yield to all this; to quit all they had in this world, and betake themselves to wandering? Why, it was for the sake of Christ. You have "been begotten (saith the apostle) to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This was in their very regeneration; this was among their *natalitia*, the principles of their birth, their new divine birth. A certain hope of better things than they were to lose for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. They were to lose all their earthly inheritance; no matter for that, "we are begotten again to a lively hope" of such an inheritance; and we shall be kept to it,—"kept by the mighty power of God through faith to salvation;" as there it follows in the same context. And,

(5.) Here must be in this work of conversion a serious, solemn taking of God for our God, when the soul is so far loosened and unhinged from sin, and from this world, to which it did cleave by sinful inclination. Then are things so prepared and made ready for its unitive closure with that great object, from whom it hath injuriously withheld itself all this while; and unto whom, out of the state of apostacy, it must now betake itself, and is now betaking itself. Now having thrown off this world, and being loosened, and saving myself, by the help and power of thy grace, from the bands and cords of my own iniquity, I come, blessed God, to accept of, and unite with thee, to take thee for my Lord and my God. Here is the term to which the soul turns, when sin and the world were the terms from which it did turn. But now, I pray, do any of you think that a soul ever took God for its God with despair?—or doth it ever take God for its God without hope? To be without God, and with ut hope, they come together; and to be with God, and with hope, must parineam be joined together too. "Ye are without hrist and without God in the world," (saith the apostle to the Ephesians, referring to their natural unconverted state, Ephes. ii. 12.) when the case herein is changed, that the soul is no longer without God, then it is no longer without hope. It would be without God, if it still were without hope; but it having conceived a hope, that God is graciously and most condescendingly willing to be embraced by such a poor wretched thing as I am, he will permit himself to be embraced; I hope he will, I say; because it hopes, therefore it chooses, therefore it accepts him, therefore it takes him. This God shall be my God; he takes him under hope; he covenants with him under hope.

You see how the case was with apostate Israel; they were gone off from God, and he threw them off, when he abandoned them to the captivity. Well, he hath, at length, gracious inclinations towards them, and within the appointed limits of time revisiteth them, releaseth them, and bringeth them back into their own land. And then the great assembly of them, in the posture of penitents, (as you read in the tenth of Ezra,) is gathered together; and the result is, "Come, now, and let us make a covenant with God." They are for covenanting with him; they have a mind to have this God for their God again. But how is this introduced? Now, because "there is hope in Israel concerning this thing," therefore let us make a covenant; since there is hope, let us do this; since there is still some ground for hope, that God is taking up the controversy, and will not abandon us finally, and quite throw us off, and cast us away from being his people; "because there is hope in Israel concerning this thing, therefore let us make a covenant." Every particular soul, upon its return to God, hath in it the epitome of this very case; I have been a wandering wretch, a revolted creature, an apostate rebel; God hath discovered himself, however, placable and willing of my return, and that I strike a covenant with him anew; and he hath published this to be the tenor of his covenant, "I will be your God;" and I am to give my consent to it, and take him hereupon for my God. Now this (I say) the soul only doth because there is hope; I will make a covenant because I see there is hope in this thing. If I make none, I am lost; if I do not covenant, I am undone; if I will be still a stranger to God, there is no way but to perish. But because there is hope I will covenant, I will take him for my God; because there is hope he will accept a poor returning soul. And,

(6.) In this work of conversion there must be an absolute self-denial, self-abnegation, and abandoning oneself. This is the plain state of the case; conversion being tha-

by which the soul enters into the Christian state of discipleship to Christ; and Christ himself hath determined the matter; 'Except a man deny himself, he cannot be my disciple;" he can be no disciple of mine except he deny himself; because Christ's business with all that he christianizeth, that he admits and takes to be his disciples, is but to take and lead them back to God: and that they are never capable of till he takes them off from their rival god. Self is their rival god; and in this converting work the soul must abandon itself, must deny itself, so as no longer to live according to its own will, as its rule; nor for its own interest, as its end. I am to live (saith the soul) a self-governed, a self-designing creature no longer. I told you before of a very lawful and necessary self-love; that is, a love to a man's soul, and a true desire of his own felicity; but that self that is to be denied is a carnal self, a brutal self, that is now become ourselves, become the whole of us; and so it comes to this with every returning soul; I am not I; *Ego non sum Ego.* There is a self to which it doth adhere, and there is a self the which it doth abandon and forsake; but, through the influence of hope, because I have hope in losing myself, I shall find myself; because I have hope, that, in throwing away this base, sordid self, I shall find and gain a rich glorious hope, self-conformed to the Divine likeness; and, finally, made happy in him. Therefore I endure such severities as these; and I do endure all in hope.

Here is in all this sowing to the Spirit, which sowing requires the breaking up the fallow ground beforehand, and the tearing out of weeds and roots, that did infest. And this is in order to such sowing to the Spirit, and that is with expectation of reaping of the Spirit what shall be suitable to it; and "they that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." But now you know, (as the apostle teacheth us to conceive, and to speak elsewhere upon another account,) every one "that soweth, soweth in hope; and he that plougheth, plougheth in hope," that he may be partaker of his hope, 1 Cor. ix. 10. When I give over sowing to my own flesh, pleasing and indulging of that, and begin to sow to the Spirit, as my ploughing before was ploughing in hope, my sowing now is sowing in hope. I would neither plough or sow, but only in hope; so it is in a spiritual sense. And hereupon,

(7.) There is in this work of conversion, a giving oneself up quite unto God, absolutely to be his: you have taken him to be yours; you abandon self thereupon, and therewithal; and now you give up yourself to be his. And is this an act of despair, when a man gives up himself to God? "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead," as the charge is, Rom. vi. 13. Is this giving or yielding ourselves to God a yielding oneself to perish?—or is this the act of a despairing soul, when it saith, I will be the Lord's? Though he saith, absolutely, Let him do with me what he will, yet it always apprehends he will not destroy me. When I yield myself to him, when I put myself into his hands by my own act and deed, by my free and voluntary surrender, I know he will never destroy what I so voluntarily resign. And again,

(8.) There is hereupon a resolution of walking in the way of holiness; I have chosen the way of truth; that I will do whatever it cost me. And this cannot be but in hope neither. I shall find a pleasure in this way, though it seem uncouth at the first; I shall find safety in it at length, at the latter end. Because I hope, therefore I choose. And there is, hereupon,

(9.) An abandoning of all associates that any have united themselves with in an evil way; a forsaking of them all; a breaking off from them. They that have been my companions in wickedness shall be my companions no longer, unless they will accompany me in the ways of God. This cannot be but in hope. There is an irksomeness in it, parting with those with whom we had all pleasantness of wit and raillery, and a delicious conversation, according to the gusts and relishes of impure imagination. And these relishes cannot be forsaken and abandoned, but upon the hopes of better. Now I shall be the associate of the blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom by baptismal vow I have been given up, and to whom now also I have afresh given up myself. Those that know, not only what it is to leave the ways of sin, but their accomplices in wickedness, do know withal that there is difficulty in it, to which they need this powerful inducement of hope, that there will be that at length which will recompense and make up all to me.

SERMON XVI.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THERE is one and a main thing yet behind, which I reserved to the last place, because there is most to be said to it. That is,

(10.) That in this converting work there is a solemn closure with Christ; a passing quite into a vital union with him, so as that the soul comes thereby to be in him, and Christ comes to be in the soul. And this transaction could never be brought about but under hope. Christ will never come to be in that united state with you by your own consent and choice, if he were not eyed by you under this notion, "Christ in us the hope of glory;" Christ is to be mine, as my great hope, for eternity, and another world. And this transaction and contracting with Christ I reserved to the last place, not as if it were the last in time in the great work of conversion, but as that which I design to speak more largely unto.

As for the method and order wherein all these mentioned things lie to one another, and wherein they may be effected and wrought in the souls of men, it may vary, and not be always the same. Some thoughts may be injected into some minds first, and others first into others. And though suitable and correspondent impressions be made according to injections of thoughts, yet the Spirit doth not always keep one way; though some things must, in their own nature, precede, yet there is certainly an intention of an end always before the use of the means. With all rational agents and movements the end must be propounded that they design for; and then the way taken that is accommodated to that end. And so the eye of the soul must be towards God finally; first, as him that I am to return to, and then come to a closure with him, in whom he only is accessible. In reference to that, singly considered, that peculiar method is observed, though there are other things that have been mentioned which may partly precede and partly follow.

But this is that I would now insist upon, and make out to you, that as in the work of conversion and regeneration, the soul is brought to an agreement with the Son of God, as the Redeemer, Saviour, and Ruler of sinners; so it is brought to this by the influence and power of hope; and it could never come to this agreement with Christ otherwise, but as its hope doth influence it hereunto. Most plain it is, that, wheresoever a work of conversion is brought about, and any do become Christians, indeed, they are brought into Christ, they are brought to have an in-being in Christ, (as the Scripture phrase is, and that we must keep to, and labour to understand the mind and meaning of the Spirit of God in it,) Christ is nothing to us, till we be in him; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. That is, he is every thing to us that our case requires and needs, if once we be in him; and nothing if we be not in him: whereas we are foolish creatures, he is made to us wisdom; whereas we are guilty creatures, he is made unto us righteousness; whereas we are impure creatures, he is made unto us sanctification; and whereas we are enslaved creatures, he is made unto us redemption, if we be in him; but nothing of all these if we be not in him. When God deals with souls in order to the renewing of them, they are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to walk in them, Eph. ii. 10. When he creates the new creature, it is said,

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'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, and all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. This is the great thing that is brought about in the work of conversion or regeneration, or the work of the new creation, which are various Scripture expressions of the same thing. The giving the soul an in-being in Christ; inverting, implanting it into him, or (which is all one) bringing about a union between Christ and the soul; in respect whereof that union is so intimate, that he is sometimes said to be in it, and it is sometimes said to be in him. They are mutually in one another. This we must consider is the thing effected in conversion, and which we are to show you, cannot be effected but by the influence of hope.

Nothing can be more suitable to the apostle's present scope, than to insist upon this, and evince it to you; for do but observe how he begins this chapter, and take notice how the whole series of his discourse proceeds upon the supposition of this one thing, their being in Christ; having spoken in the foregoing chapter, of the conflict, the war that is between the fleshly principle and the spiritual principle; and the victory of the Spirit over the flesh, in all that are sincere, and where there is a thorough regenerating work wrought, thereupon he begins this chapter thus, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" whereby he plainly signifies to us, that the fleshly principle ceaseth to govern, and it ceaseth to condemn at the same time; when sin doth no longer reign, it no longer condemns. This mighty turn and change is brought about in the state of such a person, and in the frame and temper of such a one's spirit, at one and the same time; to wit, he is now no longer condemned for sin, and he is no longer governed by it. There is no condemnation, and they no longer walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. But whence is it, that he hath this double privilege, or that this mighty turn and change is made in the state of his case? Why, now he is in Christ, he hath been instated in Christ, and now he is neither condemned for sin, nor governed by it.

And upon this supposition of persons being once in Christ, proceeds all the following discourse, through the residue of this chapter. So that now take such a one, suppose him giving (as it were) his account, standing on the brink of that rapid gulf, out of which he newly emergeth, and by grace enabled to spring forth, and make his escape; suppose we such a one, giving an account of his deliverance, and how it was brought about: You that were plunged in so deep and horrid a gulf, and so dreadful impurities, how comes it to be otherwise with you now? Why, I have been brought into Christ, and so, through the grace of God, is my state safe and comfortable. I was tossed in the common deluge and inundation of wickedness and wrath, that had spread itself over all this world; and this was my case, till I came to be in-arked in Christ, and so I became safe. But how came you unto him? or what made you offer at any such thing? Why, I can give you but this account in the general, I am saved by hope: if I had no hope, I had been lost, sunk, and perished for ever; but here was the offer made me of a Redeemer and Saviour, and I hoped it was by one that had no design to deceive me; and there I cast my anchor, and I am come to an agreement with the Son of God, the Saviour! And thus I come to be in this safe state. Safe I am through grace, and I own it, I am safe through hope.—I had been lost else, if I had no hope, and should never have looked after Jesus Christ;—but I had hope when the Gospel discovery and representation, and offer of Christ, was made to me, that it was by one that could not fail, and would not deceive; one that was not impotent, and too weak to save me, and one that would never be false and untrue to me, if I ventured upon him; and because I had hope, therefore I ventured, and so I am come to this safe state. It is by the influence of hope, that souls are brought into that agreement with the Son of God, upon which their eternal salvation and well-being depends. This is that I have to make out to you, to wit, that the soul in its first eyeing of Christ, doth eye him as the only hope of sinners.

It is observable how the apostle begins that first epistle of his to Timothy, in which a little after the beginning, he tells us in that great transport of spirit, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." But see (I say) how he begins that very chapter and epistle; "Paul, an apostle of God, and of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God, and our Saviour, who is our hope." His heart was full of this thing,—That Christ was the great hope of sinners;—and naturally breaks forth into such expressions as those that do afterwards follow: and being replenished with this sense, having his heart full of it, saith, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." He is represented and held forth in the Gospel, under such a representation as doth signify him to be the great and only hope of souls: so he is closed with, so he is received, so the soul resigns and gives up itself at length unto him.

We see that under that notion, he is laid hold on. Look to that; Heb. vi. 18. "By two immutable things, by which it was impossible for God to lie, (to wit, the oath of God added to his word,) the heirs of promise might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them." An allusion to the manslayer, one that had by casualty (but within the meaning of the law that gave immunity in such cases) slain another, for whom the cities of refuge were appointed and provided, with respect to the several tribes. This is the representation of the case of a sinner frighted and pursued by the *vindicta* of the divine law and justice; such have no way of escape remaining to them, but to fly for refuge to that hope that is set before them: that is, to Christ, the great antitype to those types,—these cities of refuge were so many types of him. But where is he to be eyed and followed now? He is entered as a forerunner into the holy of holies, he is gone within the veil, and thither our hope must follow him, as you may see in the close of that chapter; "Which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil; whither Jesus our forerunner is for us entered." I can have no hope (saith the pursued soul) but in Christ. But where will you find him? He is gone far enough out of sight, he is entered within the veil, the heavens have received him. But yet (saith the soul) I mean to follow him thither, and my hope shall enter there, even within the veil, whither Christ is for me entered; I will not be held off from him. So this laying hold upon this hope is to be understood; hope is objectively taken there, the hope set before them; it is coming to an agreement, a contract with Christ. It is that by which we actually become entered into the covenant of God by Christ, we can take hold no other way but by the covenant; taking hold of the covenant, and taking hold of him, whom that covenant doth (as it were) inwrap and give us the hold of; they are equivalent expressions, and mean one and the same thing. But then understand under what notion is he to be taken hold of; you see that text speaks the matter plainly; he is to be taken hold of, under the notion of the hope set before them. And so when the soul comes into such a union with him, as to have his entrance into it, so as that he is said to be in the soul, to be, by an internal presence, actually indwelling in it: under what notion is that? Why, that scripture tells us, Col. i. 27. "Christ in you." How is he in us, under what notion is he in us? As the hope of glory, he makes his way into the soul, under the notion of the soul's hope. The soul receives him, admits him, unites with him under that notion as its great hope; Christ who is our hope, as that mentioned introductive passage of the epistle to Timothy speaks.

And here I must note to you, that speaking of the influence of hope, upon this great transaction of the soul with Christ, I speak not of the hope which doth follow the receptive act, or the self-resigning act, but of a hope that doth precede it. It is true, there is a hope which follows it, by which every believing soul is to continue hoping to the end; often repeating that act, through its whole after-course. But there is a hope that doth precede it, of which I now speak, that is, that leads to this reception of Christ, and self-resignation to him; and under the influence whereof, the soul doth receive Christ, and resign itself, and which therefore must be understood to precede: and that is only the immediate product of the Gospel re-

presentation that is made of Christ; he is discovered to us in the Gospel in those capacities, and under those notions, in which he is to be received. This representation of him, so believed on, I believe (saith the soul) this is true, which the Gospel speaks concerning Christ, I assent to the truth of this word. Hence ariseth this hope in the soul, which intervenes between the assenting act of faith, and the relative act of faith; the soul having thus assented to the truth of the Gospel revelation, it hereupon hopes, surely I shall run no desperate hazard if I do receive Christ, and resign myself to him according as the Gospel doth direct; and so by the influence of this hope accordingly doth receive, and doth resign.

And so the matter being so far stated before us, which we are to clear to you; I shall first argue it out by some more general considerations very briefly, and shall in some particular heads that do concur in this transaction with Christ, discover to you the influence of this hope to this purpose, the bringing about such an agreement and closure of the soul with Christ.

1. It may be argued out to you, from such general considerations as these.

(1.) That the soul's contracting, or coming to such an agreement with Christ, is most certainly a very wise act, the wisest thing that ever any soul did for itself in all this world. As certainly they cannot but be great fools, who when the Gospel reveals a Saviour, will perish by neglect of him; will rather perish than receive him, when they have the Saviour in view, and the terms in view upon which he is to be received.

(2.) Wisdom in any such action is to be estimated by the reference thereof to the end, which is to be designed therein. There is no wise action, but is designed for some end or other, as aptly serving and contributing to the attaining of that end. That is a succedaneous consideration, which is plain in itself. And then add,

(3.) That the proper end, which in such a reception of a Saviour must be designed, is salvation. Nothing can be plainer, than that the end I am to design in receiving a Saviour is, that I may be saved by him. What else can it be? To which I subjoin,

(4.) That there can be no design without hope. It is naturally impossible to me to design my own salvation by receiving of a Saviour, but it must be with hope of success in this way. There can be, in all the world, no such thing as a design laid without hope of compassing it; no end proposed without hope and expectation, that at last it may be brought about. It is not needful that there should be a certainty that it shall, but there must be a hopefulness and probability that it may, otherwise there can be no design at all. It is not agreeable to the human nature to design for that, of which there is no hope. These are general considerations, which do plainly enough evince, that this transaction of the soul with Christ, in order to its own salvation, must be under the influence of hope. But,

2. I shall go on to show, from several particulars, which lie within the compass of this great work of transacting and agreeing with Christ according to the terms of the Gospel covenant, upon each of which it cannot be but hope must have influence. As,

(1.) In such a transaction with Christ, or when the soul is coming to an agreement with him upon Gospel terms, it must renounce any other saviour or way of salvation that either is co-ordinate with him or much more that shall be opposite to him; whatsoever indeed shall be subordinate must be taken in, but to think of any thing co-ordinate of any such thing, there must be a most absolute renunciation. The soul must speak its own sense in such words as the church speaks here; "Asher shall not save us, nor will we say to the works of our hands, ye are our gods; for with thee the fatherless find mercy." There must be an exclusion of all things else, that shall be co-ordinately joined with Christ, or that shall be brought into any kind of competition with him, in this his saving work, and offer. I abandon all other saviours, (this is the language of the soul,) and all expectations from any other.

Now, whereas it is manifest the soul must be brought to this, if ever it come to a closure and agreement with Christ, so it can never be brought to this, but by the influence of hope concerning him. A drowning man will never let go his twig, but in order to a surer hold of something that may be stronger, and that he may better trust to it. If men have nothing else to rely upon, but their own imagined innocency, or their righteousness, or their performances, that they have performed such and such things in a way of duty, or withheld themselves, and abstained from such and such things in a way of sin. If men have nothing else to rely upon here, they will hold till they have a better hold. It must be the influence of a better hope, some better hope introduced, that must make the soul willing to let go this hold: they will never quit the twig, till they have in view somewhat better and stronger to take hold of. There must be this, in the first place, in the soul's transacting with Christ, a renouncing of any other Saviour, or any other way of salvation.

(2.) There must be the taking on of Christ's yoke; in this transaction with him, the soul must agree to take his yoke upon it, submit its neck thereunto. The Gospel is plain and express in this, even in those words of grace themselves, than which the Gospel did never breathe sweeter and more grateful ones; "Come unto me, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest; learn of me, and take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest to your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." But such as it is, take it you must; or you are never to expect rest from me, safety, or relief from me. If I give, you must take. If I give you pardon, if I give you peace, you must take my yoke, my burden, upon your necks and shoulders; in short, the soul must submit to be governed by Christ, subject itself to his governing power, and the sceptre of his kingdom. This must be its fence, "Other lords have had dominion over me, but now I will make mention of thy name, of thine only." It must be subject to the government of Christ, both negative and positive; that is, must submit, and be bound up from every way of sin, and it must submit and yield to be bound to every way of duty: and this is taking up of Christ's yoke, and this it can never do but with hope, but under the influence of hope.

It is upon the declining of this, that many a soul comes to break with Christ after a treaty begun, and (it may be) carried on far; they may be content to entertain those pleasant thoughts which the Gospel gives some intimation of, and by its first overtures doth (as it were) suggest and offer to the soul, of having sin pardoned, and God reconciled, and being saved from the wrath to come, and of being entitled to future felicity, and a blessed state. These are pleasant thoughts, and the first aspect of the Gospel doth suggest them; and while the soul looks upon these alone, and doth not look upon what there is of conjunct duty with it, it may go on far, and there may seem to be an agreement entered, or very near to be entered, or which the soul is in a great disposition to enter into with Christ, while it is only expecting much from him, and thinks of bending itself in nothing to him. But when that part comes to be reflected on too, then the soul begins to recoil, to revolt, and to fly off. It can be contented with every thing but to be yoked, to come under restraints from such and such ways; No, (saith the soul,) I will never endure to be yoked, to come under obligation to such and such things as have displeased me, and I could never yet like. Yes, but this Christ insists on. If ever you expect rest from me, I expect you will take on my yoke; that you willingly submit to be yoked by me; it is indeed an easy yoke, and I would have thee understand the matter so, and thou wilt find it an easy yoke, when once thou hast tried it; but a yoke it is, and as such it must be received. But here is the great matter of hesitation, the wretched soul sticks at this, No, I will not endure thy yoke! It is as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, as Ephraim is represented, Jer. xxxi. 18. and if ever they come to be made sensible, they will speak that sense truly, "I was like Ephraim, thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; I was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned." This is their sense, if ever they become truly and thoroughly sensible; but in the mean time, here is the stick, because they have not been accustomed to the yoke, and cannot endure to be yoked, therefore doth many a one part with Christ, and give up all; all treaty is quite broken off between Christ and them.

And if it be, pray what is the reason of it, thou wretched soul! If one may speak thy own sense in the case, if thou wouldst but reflect and see, whether it be not so, this will prove to be it, to wit, thou hadst no hope. I believe I may speak the heart of many a one in this case, if they could but tell how to speak their own, and to observe so much of their own heart.

I would have such to consider it, as are yet in their youthful days, whether sometimes, having been struck with convictions, and having taken up thoughts of providing for their own safety, and eternal well-being, they have not thereupon come to some kind of deliberation: The Gospel is plain, here I have the Redeemer fully represented to me in it. And then this hath been your sense, Lord, I begin to take up thoughts of coming to an agreement with thee upon the terms proposed to me in thy Gospel. It may be the soul hath seemed to itself willing to submit to them, rather than perish; but afterwards, through want of watchfulness, or too much self-confidence, or too little dependance upon the grace of God, a temptation hath proved victorious in some or other particular instances, and here hath been a relapse into somewhat (it may be) of a gross sin; I inquire of such, whether this be not the truth of the case, whether hereupon their souls have not grown hopeless? Well, I shall never overcome; here are my corruptions that are too hard for me, and I shall never prevail! It may be, thoughts have been resumed, and trials have been renewed again and again, and returning temptations have prevailed, and got the upper hand. Well, saith the soul, I shall never do any good at it, I shall never make any thing of it; and thereupon all hath been given up, and the reins have been laid freely on the neck of lusts, and that resolution hath been taken, "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go;" and why it was taken, so that text tells us, Jer. ii. 29. Thou hast said, there is no hope: and what then? "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go."

So very contiguous and bordering are despair and presumption upon one another, when the soul absolutely despairs, then it most highly presumes. There is no hope; well, what then? "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go;" I will let corruption and sensual inclinations have their swing, I will obey the lusts of it, for there is no hope. And then how lamentable a thing is it, that a soul should be lost so; for if there be no hope in the case, there will be no repetition of endeavours, no further strugglings, no further contests; and then all is lost, all is gone, which is the forlorn case of those, (as I have had occasion at large to show,) who had in some measure escaped the corruptions of this world through lust, by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and are again entangled therein and overcome; their latter end with them is worse than the beginning. And whence is this? Because they have been entangled and overcome, therefore they throw away all hope. They should indeed throw away all hope of being saved, while they are overcome, and remain so, and are slaves, vassals, and captives, to corrupt inclinations; they should throw away all hope of ever being saved in this state; but they should not throw away all hope of being saved out of it. They should throw away hope of being saved without overcoming; but they ought to entertain hope that they shall overcome; that yet they shall overcome, if yet they watch, and yet strive, and yet pray, and yet depend; and there is no other thing to be done. It is not to lie down and perish thus, and say there is nothing more to be done. That is another thing to be done in this coming to an agreement with Christ, upon which hope hath influence, namely, taking on his yoke. And,

(3.) Taking up his cross, that must be done too; and you can never come to a closure with Christ, to an agreement with him upon other terms; you cannot without it be a disciple, (Luke xiv. 20.) that is, cannot be a Christian; he only makes feint offers at being a Christian, but is none till he comes to this, to take up the cross, that is, willingly to submit to these terms, that it shall be laid upon him whenever Christ pleaseth, whenever his word and providence together so state the case, that either I must embrace sin or the cross.

And as it is plain, that thus it must be whensoever the soul transacts with Christ, so it is most highly reasonable that thus it should be. Do not murmur at it, do not think it hard that you are to go (if Christ will have it so) a suffering Christian to heaven and glory; for pray, did he not bear a worse cross for you? and do not you expect to be saved from worse things by him? Did not the death that he suffered upon the cross import unspeakably more of grievance and of horror, than any thing you are capable of suffering in this world? And as to what you are capable of suffering for him, and upon his account, is it at all comparable to the sufferings you expect to be delivered from by him? Is it not reasonable then, that a state of most absolute devoting to him all your external comforts, and your very life itself, (if it should be called for,) should come in, and be made part of those terms, upon which Christ will conclude with you, that you shall be his, and he will be yours? Never mutter at it, the reason of the thing speaks itself, that you in coming to him say, Lord, I am come to make a most absolute contract with thee; take me, my life, my estate, my concernments, all that is dear to me in this world, I am willing should become a sacrifice to thee; do with me, and what belongs to me, as thou wilt, only save my soul; it is for eternal life I am come to thee, and for no temporal immunities or enjoyments.

(4.) Another thing considerable in this contract and agreement with Christ, and which is the essential thing, is the vital union that the soul must enter into with him. If ever you come to an agreement with Christ, you must be vitally united. There must be that union of life between him and you, as whereupon spirit may be said to touch spirit, and life, life; as in that 1 Cor. vi. 17. "He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit."

Oh! that this might be understood, and enter into all our hearts! I am much aware of it, how easy a thing (in comparison) an external and outside Christianity is, and how apt men are to take up with that. A religion, a Christianity, that consists but in externals, or any thing of that kind, is incomparably easier than this venturing, or adjoining of ourselves with Christ. The affrighted soul when once it is awakened in any measure, and apprehensive of the danger of its case, it readily submits to any thing but this, which is a thing partly not understood, and partly irksome and grievous to flesh and blood; it recoils at the very thought of it. Any thing is easy in comparison of this; any thing that shall only be an exercise to the outward man, or, (as I may say,) to the surface of the inner, to wit, the soul when it is under an affright, then it may yield; I will comply with any external abstinences, I will submit to any external performances, I will abstain from what you will have me, I will perform what you will have me, as to the outward man; only let me be excused from such efforts of the inner man, as I partly do not understand, and partly as I do understand them, I cannot but regret, and have an aversion to them.

Here it is that many a one breaks with Christ, because they will not endure those paroxysms, which they must pass through in passing from death to life; in turning the very vertical point. It is being created in Christ, coming to a vital union with him, that is the great thing at which the heart startles and revolts. This was the very case we read of in that 6th chapter of John, when our Saviour had said and inculcated again and again, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And he observes the tumultuations and mutinies of their minds at the spiritualities of his foregoing discourse: thereupon saith he, Do not murmur at this, for I tell you, that "no man can come to me, except the Father draws him." And in the sequel of that discourse, (verse 65th,) Did not I tell you before, "No man can come to me except it be given him of my Father?" They were willing to comply far in externals; you see they followed Christ from place to place, with mighty complacency attended upon his Gospel, were pleased with his doctrine; when they miss him in one place, they run to another part of the country, they take ship and follow him; when they understood he was gone to the other side of the sea of Tiberias, they throng after him in great multitudes; they leave the affairs of their callings to go from place to place after him; but yet, when they heard this from him, many wen back, and walked no more with him. This is the sense of many a one towards Christ; Lord, we will follow thee all the

country over; we will go from place to place, wheresoever we may meet thee, or hear any thing of thee. And these persons, while they did thus much externally, did also abstain from much, you may be sure, where they could have no opportunity of indulging and gratifying their appetites; being thus hurried from place to place, pursuing and following Christ; yet they did it. So it may be with many a one besides, in our days, when they are awakened, and in some terror, there are no external abstinences that we think or know will offend; we will no more be drunk with the drunken, nor scorn with the scorners; no, by no means; we will undergo any restraint and severities in this kind, rather than run the hazard of our souls; and we will stick at no external performances; nothing that hath but bodily exercise in it. We care not how many sermons we go to hear; we will go any where to the church, or to the meeting-place, where we may hear the most serious ministers; we will be sure always to stick close to the honest side, and to the best cause; we will be true to the last, to the protestant religion and government, and to that party that adhere thereto. All this is fairly and well overtured; but tell them, that besides all this you must have a work wrought in your heart and soul, which is to be done by a divine power. By a divine power, say ye? Then where are we? Can we command the Divine power? This is the foolish cheat and deceit that many put upon themselves; and they make the matter to be hopeless from such expressions; "No man can come to me, except the Father that hath sent me draw him," and "except it be given him of my Father." Here are true and just premises, from whence many times men allow themselves to infer the falsest conclusion imaginable. That, therefore, they have nothing to do, and therefore they have nothing of hope remaining to them; considering that which is only in the power of another, not in their own. But upon serious and sober thoughts;—is it not all one, whether you have that power of your own, or may have it from another, if it be duly sought in the prescribed way that plainly lies in view before us all? Doth not the same Gospel, the same word, that saith, "no man can come to me except the Father that hath sent me draw him," or "except it be given him of my Father," say also, that he "will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him," as readily as parents will give bread to their children rather than a stone?

This doth not difference the case; it is only a reservation that the great God doth think fit to keep to himself, as suitable to the majesty of a God in the way of his dispensations towards perishing creatures, offending creatures. Mercy you shall have; help you shall have; power you shall have to do what is necessary to be done in order to your being made safe and happy. But you shall know you are to receive it; you are to seek it; you are to come upon the knee for it; you are to be in the dust for it; to wait, and be prostrate at the foot of a mercy-seat, and before a throne of grace. This is suitable to God, and it is suitable to you; to an offended Majesty, and to offending creatures; but it doth not infer that there is therefore no hope, because there is such a vital union to be brought about with Christ, as can only be brought about by a divine power; for there is still hope that you may have that power afforded you, and exerted in you, both from the gracious nature of God, to which it can never agree to let a soul perish that is aiming at a compliance with him, in his own way, and upon his own terms. And there is encouragement from most express words of Scripture, that carry such sweet alluring breathings of grace in them; "Turn ye at my reproof; I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you," Prov. i. 28. And do you think these words signify nothing? "As I live, saith the Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel? Turn, and live." There must be offers of turning, aims to turn, aimings to come to his closure, reachings forth of the soul towards Christ, to come to a living union with him; and in that way you are to expect help.

Objection 1. But it may be said, what hope yet can there be, when, upon the whole matter (as we have lately been taught) there are very few that are saved, and when it is so apparent that the generality do perish, do walk on in destructive ways,—ways that take hold of hell, and lead down to the chamber of death? What hope is there for us, that we that are here in this assembly, when there are so few that are saved; what hope (I say) can there be given to us, that we shall be of those few?

Answer. To this let me say but thus much at present; that, as few as they are, who have you heard of concerning whom you have ground to think, to admit a thought, that they did perish, or were in likelihood to perish, taking the course that hath been directed? That is, having the terms of the Gospel in view before them, and aiming and striving to their uttermost, and accompanying their endeavours with earnest supplication to the God of all grace, for help to comply with those terms, and come up to them? As few as they are that are saved, they are certainly much fewer that ever perished this way, if ever you can suppose that any one perished that doth thus. If there are few that shall be saved, do but consider how much fewer a number you have here to oppose of such as perish in such a way, and upon such terms: incomparably fewer, if ever it can be thought that any at all have thus perished. And no more needs to be said to this now.

Objection 2. But it may perhaps be said,—it seems, however, a very mean thing, that the soul, in coming to a closure with Christ, should be influenced hereunto only by the hope of being saved; I come to him, because I hope I shall be saved by him; I have terrible destruction in view, and I find myself beset with dangers and deaths, and I have no other way to escape; but the hope of escaping brings me to Christ. This (it may be said) is mean.

Answer. Mean, say ye? And to whom is it mean? Is it mean to you, or is it mean to Christ? It is very true indeed, to you it is mean, and it is fit it should be so; for a company of offending creatures, must they stick at any thing that may be mean to them in order to their being saved? Why, man, it is in order to thy being saved from eternal death and destruction; and wilt thou grudge at any thing, because it is mean, that tends and is necessary to the saving thee? No; it is fit for us to put our mouths in the dust, (as was said,) "if there may be any hope." They that have forfeited their lives, and deserved a thousand hells, is it for them to stick at any thing because it is mean? But when to you it is mean, to Christ it is not mean; that he should be the hope of sinners, to him it is honourable; to him it is glorious. And by how much the more it is debasing to you, it is so much the more exalting to him, magnifying of him in his office, and magnifying of him in the great and high excellencies of his nature and person.

SERMON XVII.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

But now there doth somewhat need to be considered in reference to all that hath been opened, which may, by way of objection, occur and offer itself to the thoughts of many. As,

Objection 1. This may be objected; that it seems not so intelligible how hope should have influence upon conversion; for, can there be any thing good in the soul before conversion? And inasmuch as by conversion itself the first grace is given, can there be any grace before this first? Why, there are several things that may be said to this, which it will be of very great use to us to consider; and which (this being a fit way of introducing them) I choose to introduce this way. As,

Answer 1. That there is always a difficulty in fixing the beginning of things. The very *transitus* of any thing from its *non esse* to its *primum esse*, from its state of nothingness to its beginning to be, is always a matter of real difficulty, and which cannot but carry somewhat of obscurity and dubiousness along with it. But,

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Answer 2. It was upon the foresight of what I tell you now is liable to be objected, that I told you formerly of a two-fold hope, which we are to consider in reference to the present case; to wit, of a human and rational hope, and of a holy and gracious hope. The former whereof is leading, and introduced to the latter; and, indeed, to be pre-supposed to it as a foundation, according as the human rational nature is unto the holy gracious nature; every one must be a human creature before he can be a holy creature; the being of the man precedes the being of the saint, or holy man. So it is in this case too; the very being of a human rational hope must precede that of the gracious and holy hope; and as such, it is not without the influence that hath been mentioned to the mentioned purposes. If any yet cannot hope as a saint, they ought according to the grounds they have in view before them, to hope as a man. If you cannot yet hope as a holy creature, you ought to hope as a reasonable creature, according to those grounds that God hath laid in view before you. And,

Answer 3. To hope as a human and reasonable creature is to hope, upon the consideration of such things as have that tendency in themselves to found and raise a hope in us; that is plain and obvious in itself; for consideration is nothing else but the exercise of our reasoning faculty; a communing with ourselves; a discussing matters with our own souls, or in our own minds, according to the concernment that we may apprehend them to be to us. And in that way, (if there be a real ground,) hope ought to be excited and raised up in us. And we ought to be active, in order to its being so. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope; (Lam. iii. 21.) recollecting and calling to mind such things as are proper matter of hope, ought to excite and raise such hope in us. And again,

Answer 4. This God himself doth point out to us as the proper method of conversion; to wit, the engaging and setting on work our own considering power, which, being duly engaged, hath a tendency that hath been noted to raise hope. It is marked out as the great bar and obstruction to conversion, when people will not consider: "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people will not consider," Isaiah i. 3, 4. "Ah, foolish people! a sinful nation; a people laden with iniquity; a seed of evil-doers; children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord," Isaiah i. 16. And afterwards, he reasons with them to turn; "Wash ye, make ye clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;" as you find throughout the series of that chapter. He calls upon his apostate people, (when they have revolted and gone back from him, and when therefore the exigency of the case makes their conversion and return necessary,) he calls upon them to show themselves men; "remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, (oh,) ye transgressors!" Isaiah xlvi. 8. And for that very reason, he discovers himself ready to show mercy; when he hath at any time the opportunity given him of observing such a temper and disposition of spirit to consider and return. "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive," Ezek. xviii. 27, 28. "Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die." "Because he considers and turns;" if he do not consider, he will never turn. If he do consider, he may, especially when he doth consider such things as tend (as was said) to found and raise a hope for him of mercy in returning. Again,

Answer 5. Such things as ought to be considered in such a case, they do more clearly and distinctly present themselves to view with them that live under the Gospel. That gives mighty advantages to such considerations as carry matter of hope with them; and God will deal with all sorts of people according to that measure of light which he affords them. For those that live under the Gospel, they must be dealt withal according to what discovery is extant before them of his mind and will by that; for those that have no Gospel, they will be dealt with by other measures. But, for those that live under the Gospel, to whom that bright, and morning, and pleasant light hath shined, they ought to judge, and make, and estimate of their own state and case accordingly; and think, I am not a creature turned loose into the world to wander in it as in a wilderness; but I am by special, peculiar, divine favour placed under the dispensation of an everlasting Gospel, in which he speaks his mind distinctly to men about the ways and methods of recovering and saving lost and perishing souls; so that whatsoever hath a tendency to administer any matter of hope, it lies in view with the greatest advantage imaginable, before whom this divine and express revelation of the mind of God about these concernments is come. And,

Answer 6. That hope that shall (upon consideration of the things that have that tendency) arise in the souls of any in order to their conversion, and before that work be as yet done, we must understand it to be greatly improved and assisted by those greater measures of common grace, that are afforded to them that live under the dispensation of the Gospel. And so, I told you at first, that human rational hope, assisted by common grace, may have a great and very significant influence towards this blessed change that is to be wrought upon the soul. And though it be very true, therefore, that there can be no special grace before the first special grace, (as the matter speaks itself,) yet there may be common grace before special grace. That grace that goes under the name of common, it is leading, it is preparatory, it is antecedent to that which goes under the notion of special. And so the doubt is answered, what grace can there be before the first grace? Before the first grace, there may be other grace,—grace that is not special grace; that is common, and that is in a greater measure afforded to them that live under the Gospel. And thereupon I add,

Answer 7. That there are sundry obvious considerations that tend to raise hope, which, as common grace falls in with it, (though it be but merely human and rational hope otherwise,) may have a mighty hand in the soul's first turn to God, or an influence upon it; considerations that tend partly to awaken in the soul a sense of its own case; and that tend thereupon to erect and lift it up towards God in hope. I do not confine the discourse I am upon, nor would I confine your thoughts, to such considerations merely, abstractedly, and singly, as tend to beget hope: but such as tend to beget a sense first, and then to beget hope; that is, when the soul is made to feel its own distress, and perceive sensibly its own forlorn wretchedness; this makes it the more susceptible of that hope that must have influence upon this great turn to God through Christ. And those will be such considerations, as they who live under the Gospel have their present and constant advantage for. It is for one to sit down with himself, and think; and we may be sure the Gospel will never do that soul any good that never thinks, that never considers. But if one under the dispensation of the Gospel will set himself to consider. he hath such considerations as these obvious to him:—

"I am an apostate creature; a poor wretch fallen from God, cut off from him by mine own iniquity, who hath been the Author of my life and being to me, and from whom alone I can expect a blessed eternity. I have by apostacy incurred his displeasure, fallen short of his glory, fallen under his wrath; I am, by nature, a child of wrath, as well as others are; I know there is a satisfaction due to Divine justice from me, for the injury and wrong I have done to the majesty and authority of his government over me, who gave me breath; I know I am never capable of making that satisfaction myself; if I were to lie everlastingly in consuming flames I should be always satisfying, but I should never have satisfied. But I find withal (and the Gospel tells me so) God doth not expect from me that I should satisfy for my own sin; he hath devolved that matter wholly into another hand; and the Gospel having declared to me his mind and pleasure herein, it would be the greatest presumption imaginable in me to offer at being a satisfier for my own sin; to offer at that were to offer an affront instead of a satisfaction; to suppose I could satisfy, were for me to measure arms with the Almighty; it were to take upon me as if I were a God,—as if I were the man his fellow; as if any thing that could be done or suffered by me could bear proportion to the rights and dignities of the Divine government, when they have been invaded, usurped, and violated, as they

have been by me. But I find by the same Gospel, that though I am not required to make satisfaction to the justice of God for my own sin myself, yet I am required to return to God, and to receive his Son, who hath made that satisfaction; and to receive him with a dependent and subject heart, casting myself upon him for salvation, and subjecting myself for government, even unto eternal life. I find this is required; every one that lives under the Gospel may consider so, and ought to consider so. This light shines into every one's face that lives under the Gospel."

And then hath every one of us to consider further,—"But for this mighty turn I find for myself no power; I ought to turn to God through Christ, but I cannot; not through natural impotency, but moral; for this can be resolved only into disinclination of will. My will is disinclined, bent another way; I must tear myself off from those ways of sin that I have run in; I cannot alter the bent of my own heart, no more than a leopard can his spots, or a blackmoor his skin. Here is the great stress and hinge of this case. That must be done, or I am lost, which I myself cannot do. But such a one hath yet further to consider; I find it is charged upon me to return, to come back to God through Christ; to repent towards God, to believe in his Son. I find these things are charged upon me; and my reason and conscience cannot but tell me, that that impotency which only lies in a disaffected disinclined will, can never excuse me from such duty. This is the very sum of all malignity itself; a will against my duty; a will against the good and acceptable will of God: this carries all the malignity of hell in it, to have such a will. Therefore this ill habit and bent of my will can by no means in the world invalidate the obligation of those laws and precepts, that bind me to repentance and faith in the Son of God; they lie upon me as a matter of indispensable duty still." That such a one hath to consider and think that,

Then nothing can be more obvious than to consider further,—

"If I have such things lying upon me as matter of most apparent and indispensable duty, for which I have no present power, nothing remains to me but to offer at my duty; otherwise I lay myself under the manifest guilt of most insolent rebellion; for I cannot but say, that a sinner is righteously enjoined to repent. If it were great iniquity in me first to offend, it is most apparent duty to repent of my having offended: and if God offer to me his own Son to be to me a Saviour and a Ruler both together, surely it is most justly enjoined upon me that I receive him as such, that I rely upon him as a Saviour, and subject myself to him as a Ruler. I have nothing to say against the equity, reasonableness, and obligingness of these laws of his. Why, then, if they do lay actual obligation upon me, and I feel no present power in my own soul to comply with them; but cannot but be sensible of impotency, to wit, a disinclined heart. What? I offer at turning to God? I may as well offer at removing a mountain. Here is a difficulty invincible to me; a power that I can by no means overcome; a carnal, corrupt inclination, carrying me another way, and that strengthened by all the infernal powers of hell and darkness too; for every one that is turned is "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," Acts xxvi. 18. And who hath "delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Coloss. i. 13. A mighty turn this is! And when the law saith to me, Repent; when it saith, Turn, believe, receive Christ; subject thyself to him; rely upon him. If I look into myself I find myself dead; "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins!" (Eph. ii. 1, 2.) where all have naturally their conversations, "according to the course of the world, and the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." What shall I do in this case against all the power of my own indwelling corruption, and all combined powers of the hellish infernal kingdom, that labour to the uttermost to keep me off from God, to keep me off from Christ, that I may never come to a closure? What is to be done in this case? Why, the mentioned considerations are most obvious; to wit, those great evangelical precepts requiring nothing but matter of most plain and indispensable duty, from which a disinclined will is no excuse, but rather the highest aggravation imaginable of my iniquity and guilt, if I comply not; so as that I am held under a strict tie to do what the evangelical law requires and charges upon me. Nothing is (I say) plainer, and more distinctly in view, than that I am to offer at what I cannot myself effect; otherwise I add insolent rebellion to all my former indisposition. And I find this is the plain meaning of the commands, as they are explicated by superadded promises. "Turn ye at my proof," Prov. i. 23. What, I alone? What, I by myself?—No; do you turn; do as much as in you is; put yourselves into a turning posture; and "I will pour out my spirit upon you; and I will make known my words unto you."

And to excite and raise hope higher in this case, the poor wretch hath to consider this;

"It is the God of all grace that I am now to apply myself to; the God that is rich in mercy, and that is the Father of mercies; and again, I am to apply myself to him for the concernments of my soul; of an immortal spirit, that he hath put into me, who is himself the Father of spirits. Why should I not expect he should be kind to his own offspring?—a poor wandering soul; a degenerate, apostate spirit, that is sensible of having apostatized, that is now aiming to return and to come back to him? Why should not I expect him to be merciful, to be helpful to a poor soul that sees itself lost if he do not help,—if he do not put forth his hand and draw me into union with him, and with his Son, in whom he knows only I must live, and without which union I am left still under a necessity of perishing? And here is this to be considered,—he is more nearly related to this spirit of mine than to my flesh, more nearly to this soul of mine than to my outward man. I have found him kind and compassionate to my flesh and outward man. This is fit to be suggested to any man's soul that begins to awaken and consider his case; and, further, to say within himself, Thou hast nothing to do but to hope in the divine mercy; and thou hast already found the Father of mercies merciful to thy meaner and baser part. How hast thou lived all this while in this world? It was by him that thou didst live, and through him thou wast born; and thou hast hung upon him ever since thou hangedst upon thy mother's breast. Where hast thou had thy bread for a day, and day by day, but from him? Where hast thou had thy breath every moment? thy breath was continually in his hand. He that hath been so compassionate to that flesh of thine without thy seeking, will he not be compassionate to thy soul, if thou dost seek him,—if thou dost crave,—if thou dost cry, and tell him, Here is one of the souls that thou hast made, ready to perish under the tyranny of a carnal inclination, and under the power of the great destroyer of souls? Is there no place for hope in this case? though the case be a distressed case, it plainly speaks itself not to be a desperate case; will not he, who is the God of all grace, show compassion to a soul that is aiming to come back to him upon his call, and when he calleth him, though he can come but faintly, struggle but weakly; though he can but aim to come?"

And, again, you have this to consider to found and raise hope; that you do him the highest homage that in your case and circumstances you are capable of doing, when you throw yourselves upon his mercy; and it is that which he is most highly pleased with. "He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy:" a scripture, that any soul which begins to have an awakened sense of the state of his own case, ought to have as a frontlet before his eyes, and engraven (as it were) upon the palms of his hands. This ought to be considered; Though I cannot comply with him as I should, I cannot do such things as are just and righteous, (which a most unexceptionable, evangelical law doth ask for, and require, and challenge,) yet I am willing to do him all the homage I am capable of, by casting myself upon his mercy, and by making him my ultimate and last hope. Say you so? (saith God;) is this your posture? Now you please me beyond all things that you were capable of doing besides, or any other way. "He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy." This is to acknowledge the divine mercy to be a bottomless abyss,

never to be fathomed; you hope in his mercy, when otherwise you had no hope in any thing else. This is that wherein he takes pleasure; this is to acknowledge him to be God, to give him the proper glory of his Deity; and own him to be infinite and immense even in goodness, that great excellency and perfection of his nature.

And admit that all considerations, all the actual thoughts you have of all these things, and your revolving them to and fro in your own minds, are all, as yet, but within the compass, enabling you to raise a hope upon so plain grounds as these are, which lie in view before you; yet every one sees that these things have a manifest tendency to the soul's turning to God through Christ; and so lie in your way to that special grace, wherein the great turn itself doth lie. And then I add again, in the last place, that,

Answer 8. That, whenever that great turn is brought about wherein is the great effort of grace, which is most special and peculiar, it is manifest that a holy hope is one of the things that doth first appear and show forth itself in this great turn. For the soul is to close with God in Christ; but this is impossible to it, but as it hopes for acceptance. This can never be the act of a despairing soul. If the soul look upon God and Christ with absolute despair, it is hardened with a diabolical hatred; and can never close, can never unite with him but when it opens itself to receive Christ, and all the fulness of God. It is hope that opens it, and hath the great influence into the sincere covenanting act, the vital covenanting act, by which the soul takes God in Christ, and surrenders and gives up itself to God, through Christ. And that is sincere, and so continues, or doth not continue, according as the soul hopes or hopes not, or hopes truly and fully, or otherwise.

The expressions to this purpose are worthy to be written in letters of gold, which we find in Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8. Where we have the very root of sincerity, and the very root of apostacy, pointed out to us both together, even with manifest reference to the truth of the thing I am now inculcating to you: "That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments; and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart aright; and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." The design of all this is to signify, that God would have a people to succeed from that root and stock that should be better than their fathers: but wherein should they be better? or should they come to be better? Why, their fathers were stubborn and rebellious; they were false and unsteadfast in the covenant of God; they did covenant, but it was on terms: "They did but flatter him with their mouths, (as is afterwards expressed,) and lied to him with their tongues." Their hearts were not sincere; there was no fixedness and stability in the covenant of God. And wherein should their children be better? Why, I will have them be taught and instructed, and to learn, from all the methods of the dispensations of God towards their forefathers, to set their hope in God. This was the great thing their fathers did not; and therefore continued rebels still; and when they seemed to covenant were false and treacherous, and unsteadfast in their covenant with God. But if ever there come to be sincere covenanting, it must come from their setting of their hope in God as the "God of all grace;" as the God "rich in mercy;" to whom, as such, (each must say,) "I do, through his Christ, adjoin my soul, and tell him, Here I will live; here I will die; I am come to this point, brought to thee by the invitation of thine own word and Gospel. It hath bid me repent and believe, and required me to yield myself to God, and to take God for mine. I do all this upon the warrant of, and in obedience to, the authority of the law of grace, that supreme, that benign law." This is that which makes the soul steadfast; brings it to a point; now it finds this is a work that will hold, when the soul is setting its hope in God, and unites itself by covenant with him.

And so much with reference to that first objection, which served me to introduce these sundry things, which I hope will be of use to those that consider them.

Objection 2. But, in the second place, it may be further objected: If hope,—the hope of being saved, will have such an influence upon conversion in order thereunto, how comes it to pass, that when the most do so generally profess a hope of being saved, yet so few are converted thereby? Is hope like to have such an influence upon conversion in order to salvation, when we find that men do very generally hope to be saved, and have very great hope of being saved; yet many of them (the greater part of them it may be) are never converted?

Answer. To that there are some things to be said, also, that it may be of equal use to us to understand and consider. As,

1. Therefore it is, that many hope to be saved who are never converted by their hope, because they do maim the object of their hope; that is, whereas they should hope first to be converted, and then, secondly, so to be saved, they hope to be saved without being converted. And so one great part of the object of their hope is left out; and their hope, therefore, is not only not subservient, but is obstructive to their conversion; and so, consequently, to their salvation too. It doth (I say) not only subserve it, but hinders it. They hope they shall be saved,—that they make the abstract and separate object of their hope, excluding and shutting out from that salvation all considerations of the sanctity, the purity, the holiness, which the conversion, that they should conjoin therewith, carries in it. And this doth not only not help, but hinders both their conversion and salvation. It doth not help it, because the hope of being saved without it is never likely to make them look after being converted. And it hinders it, because it cannot but provoke God to keep at a distance from them, and move his displeasure to the highest against them; for they do in this kind of hope, not only not hope according to his word, but they hope against it, so as that their very hope is the giving him and his word the lie; the worst and most provoking thing that can be thought. Their very hope is saying to themselves, "Peace, peace," though they walk after the imagination of their own hearts; though they never alter their course, and though their hearts be never changed, yet they shall have peace. This (I say) is to give the lie to the divine truth, and the word of his truth; and so carries in it matter of the highest provocation; as that scripture expresseth it, "If any man think" and speak, though it be but in his own heart, though he do but mutter it inwardly, though he do but whisper it to himself, "I shall have peace though I walk in the way of my own heart, and after the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst;" to add the act of sin to the desire of sinning, Deut. xxix. 18, 19. My jealousy shall smoke against that man, (though he doth not speak out, though he doth but say it in heart,) for he doth me the greatest injury in his heart imaginable; his conceptions of me are ignominious; he makes me an impure deity, that will give peace to him that walketh on in his wicked ways; so that I should not only be reconciled to him in his wicked way, but I am supposed to be reconcileable to his wickedness,—to that wicked way in which he walketh. I am supposed untrue to myself; he makes me a foolish deity, that all the threats and menaces that are in my word against daring, insolent sinners, are only indeed *terrica lamenta*, bug-bears, to frighten children and fools with; therefore (saith he) my jealousy shall smoke against that man; I will not spare him, I mean to paradigmatize such a man as this, and to let all the world know, by the severity of my vengeance against such a one, that I am what he did not think me to be, a true, a holy, a just, and jealous God. That hope that men have of being saved without ever being converted, or turned to God through Christ, and breaking off from the way of sin, it is of this import, as you have heard. It carries this secret aspect and language in it, so detracting, so reproaching and ignominious to the true, and holy, and jealous God. And therefore it is not to be thought strange, if men have such a hope as this, and it never doth them good. They will never be the better for it; it never makes them good men in this world, nor happy in the other. And then,

Answer 2. Besides this horrid maim and flaw, which is in the object of their hope, (separating therefrom what should be conjoined therewith,) there is an equally great defect in their very hope itself, which makes it not strange, that it should not have an influence into their conversion:

for, if the matter should be examined, what are these men's hopes? It resolves into this; to wit, it is nothing else, but only no fear; it is a negative hope, and no positive thing; a hope that consists in nothing else, but only not fearing. They find they do not fear their being miserable, and that is all. It is very true, indeed, there is nothing that is more common language in the profanest mouths, than that form of asseveration, as they hope to be saved. But let the meaning of those very words be examined and inquired into, and it dwindles into nothing:—Hope to be saved? What do you mean by this hoping to be saved? Let the matter be but grasped, do but grasp at it, and you find this hope signifies nothing but only no fear. There is many a one with whom, in reference to many things, there is neither fear nor hope; and it is so here: as from a country that is either merely imaginary, or that you know nothing of, you never hope for good, or fear any evil from thence; you are equally void of any hope, or of any fear: who doth either hope any good, or fear any evil from an Utopian land? This is the case with most of these confident persons, that will briskly say, upon all occasions, As I hope to be saved, it is so and so. And what is this hope to be saved? It is only their no fear to be damned. It is true they have no fear of being damned; and this no fear they call hope, as if nothing must signify something. This is a plain state of the case; that hope that is to influence salvation, and, in order thereunto, conversion must be a real, active, vigorous principle in the soul; not a mere nullity, not a nonentity,—as no fear is,—never to fear is.

But you will say, Where lies the difference between these things? I answer, it is manifold and vast. As,

1. As to the positive hope that there should be, it is grounded in faith; but this (no fear) is grounded in infidelity; that is grounded in religion, this is grounded in atheism and irreligion. A vast difference! He that seriously hopes, hopes because he believes the word of God is true, and that such and such things have a real foundation there; and because he hath an inward reverence and adoration of God; and therefore, upon such and such discoveries of him as he is pleased to make of himself and the impression on his heart suitably, there is a temperament in the soul towards him, made up of reverence and love, with some kind of dependance and trust. This is all founded in faith, and in religious sentiments; but this same [no fear] is founded in nothing but atheism and irreligion; they have no fear of that which they really believe is nothing, or they think will never be. And then again,

2. This [no fear] is nothing, whereas this hope that is required is a most positive thing, a principle of great liveliness, vigour, and activity, in its own sphere. That which is nothing can work nothing, effect nothing, in order to conversion or salvation. And again,

3. This [no fear] may signify nothing at all more than only the soul's unconcernedness for any such matter; whereas, real hope signifies its great concernedness, its deep intention of mind and thought about such things. There is nothing does more intend a man's thoughts towards any thing than real hope doth; but this [no fear] may signify his not minding any such concernments at all; his being totally unconcerned about them. So it may in many things, in which one apprehends himself to have no real interest one way or other, and so, accordingly, is in the temper of his mind indifferent in reference to such things. There are many such concernments of which we are totally ignorant, have no real knowledge or thought; the concernments of some remote countries, at the uttermost ends of the earth, which we know nothing of, understand nothing of their affairs; we are accordingly altogether unconcerned what is done there, and utterly without the exercise of hope or fear, as to the events of things among them. But it is not so with us in reference to the concernments that are under our notice. There is nobody so indifferent in reference to France, Germany, Flanders, and Savoy, as to the occurrences there, and in the conclave, and nearer home in Ireland. There is nobody that useth thought in those things that is so unconcerned about them, but that there will be various agitations of hope and fear this way; and that, according to the aspect of things among us, nobody can be supposed so indifferent among us, that there should be, in reference to these things, neither hope nor fear. But every one, according to the wish and inclination of his own mind, hath his hope or his fear variously stirring in him thereunto. But it is possible there may be a total vacancy of fear where there is no concern at all. And as there is no fear, so there is no hope; that is, the things are never minded, never thought of.

And this is the true state of the case with the most in reference to the concernments of another world, as if it were a mere Utopia. They have, in reference thereunto, nothing of hope or of fear, but lie all their days in a stupid dream. And these are the persons, I confess, about whom I have the least hope, and the most fear; to wit, they who in reference to the concerns of their own souls, have neither hope nor fear; but lie in a drowsy sleep all their time, and dream away all their days; and whereas they talk of hoping to be saved, that hope is nothing else but only a not being afraid to perish, because they apprehend no danger, because they have nullified to themselves the great objects of hope and fear.

This, therefore, doth not signify the no influence of hope, but it signifies only the inefficacy, or no influence of no hope; for that hope is no hope which they miscall by that name. The most that they can make of it is, that it is no fear; but, as it is no fear, so it is no hope neither; that is, there is a vacancy equal both of hope and fear; and nothing makes their case more deplorable than this, that they are likely to perish even while there is hope, for want of hope. And this is the forlorn, dismal state of many that live under the Gospel; they cannot hope without the intention of hope; there can be no rational or human hope, much less that hope that reaches to the pitch of common grace; without the intention of thought, their thoughts will not be engaged; and one day passeth with them after another, and not a serious thought taken up, Shall I be saved, or shall I perish? What will become of me when I die?

But I hope it is not generally so with you. It would be very sad if it were; when you hear so many Lord's days together, one after another, so much of salvation; one comes and preacheth to you upon that great question, "Are there few that shall be saved?" and another comes and preacheth to you upon that expostulatory passage, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" and a third, he comes and preacheth to you upon this assertion, "We are saved by hope:" nothing but being saved, nothing but salvation, rings in your ears from one Lord's day to another. And it will be an amazing thing, if, after all this, we have no concernment about being saved; so that we find no room, no place for the exercise of hope or fear; hope of being saved, or fear of perishing by not being saved.

But if the true import of the word salvation were understood, and received into our souls, it would make work among us; it would find us exercise either for hope or fear; when we have so much spoken of salvation as we find in Scripture; and when the name of the Son of God is signalized to us, and celebrated among us as a Saviour, (he shall be called Jesus, for he shall be a Saviour to save his people from their sins,) why, every one that would but use his understanding, would say, What doth this word signify! What is the meaning of all this talk of salvation; of a Saviour, and of being saved? what doth it signify? It plainly signifies that all this world is likely to be shortly in a great flame, and that the Judge is at the door; that hell will shortly swallow up all a whole world of ungodly men, except that residue that shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet their Redeemer in the air, and so to be for ever with the Lord. And if we would but allow the word salvation its true import and significancy, it would be far from us to be without hope, in reference to being saved. And then we should come to understand somewhat of the significancy and of the influence of this hope, the hope of salvation, in order to our conversion first, and then to our salvation itself in the final state.

SERMON XVIII.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

HAVING proposed to show the influence that hope hath unto salvation, by showing both what influence it hath upon conversion, that brings us into a state of salvation; and then what influence it hath upon the Christian's perseverance even to the end, by which we are continued in that state, and so finally saved. We have hitherto insisted upon the former, and are now to proceed to the latter; to speak to that influence which hope hath upon a Christian's perseverance in that holy course through which he is to pass on to the state of final glory and blessedness. And here it cannot but be obvious to you, from what hath been formerly said, that hope, as it refers to the perseverance of a Christian, must needs considerably differ from hope as it hath at first influence into conversion; or a person's entrance into the Christian state, both in the nature and in the object; or in respect of the object of the one and of the other hope.

1. In respect of the nature of the one and the other, that hope that doth influence conversion, and is necessarily presupposed to it, (if you consider the nature of it,) hath no more in it than what doth belong to a merely human, rational hope, assisted only by common grace; for special grace cannot be supposed to be before conversion or regeneration; but even that human rational hope, it hath its influence and usefulness towards conversion, as other things belonging to the human nature have; not only our minds and understandings, by which we are capable of thinking and considering of things that are to affect, and by which we are to be wrought upon, in order to conversion. But even to go lower than that, our very external senses themselves; "faith cometh by hearing," and so it may come by reading the word and Gospel, which is to be the means of conversion and salvation to our souls. But if you look to the nature of that hope which is all along to influence the course of a converted person, one that is become sincerely a living Christian, that hope must needs be a part of the new man, or of the new nature, which is in regeneration communicated and imparted to the soul. And, accordingly,

2. The object of the one and the other hope must needs very much differ, even supposing the soul to be awakened, and that God is beginning to deal with it in order to conversion; it must be supposed to have some hope concerning the issue of this treaty, wherein it is now engaged with the great God about so important a matter. Otherwise (as hath been inculcated unto you again and again) it is impossible it should ever turn; converting and turning to God is not the act of a despairing but of a hoping soul; and the dispositions thereunto do suppose some hope. And the object of this hope must be understood to be God as now to be reconciled. The object of the other hope that doth influence a Christian's after-course unto final salvation, is God hereafter to be enjoyed. God to be reconciled is the object of that hope, which a person hath while God is dealing with him in order to conversion; to wit, we must suppose him awakened; and being so, considers and bethinks himself, I am an offending, guilty creature: the God that make me hath just matter of controversy with me; will he be reconciled, or will he not? will he always hold me guilty, will he bear himself as an enemy and an avenger to a poor guilty creature as I am? or will he pardon? Will he forgive? Will he show mercy? I hope he will, saith the poor trembling wretch. And then he turns at length. When God is dealing with the soul in order to conversion, it hath this hope in the midst of a great deal of fear and doubt,—Who knows but God will show mercy to a returning soul? And thereupon it turns. So the object of his hope is now God to be reconciled,—present reconciliation.

But the object of this hope after conversion, all along, through his succeeding course, is God to be enjoyed in the final state; now more and more, and perfectly hereafter in that state, which is to be final and eternal.

And this the very state of the case itself doth plainly enough suggest to us. There must be this difference also, as to the object of the one hope and the other, according to the difference in the very nature of this and the other hope. The soul before regeneration, it can generally affect and covet to be happy, (which is natural to man,) and dread to be miserable; it is capable of being afraid of wrath and torment; and being so, the state of the case, as it is in view before it, not excluding hope, it can entertain some hope, a human rational hope amidst all that fear. And hereupon, the main thing that it is exercised and taken up about, is the present state of its case, whether God will be reconciled or no; but with final reference too, to its future state, that is, especially the privative part of it, salvation and escape from eternal wrath. It can very well entertain hopes, and admit of agitations of affections to what goes no higher than so, from the very nature of such a subject, an intelligent, reasonable soul, that is capable of happiness, and in general of desiring it; and that apprehends itself liable to misery, and that cannot, without dread and abhorrence, think of that.

But in the mean time, before regeneration it is incapable of any such workings and dispositions as do belong to the holy divine nature. It cannot yet love God; it cannot yet desire a felicity in him; it cannot covet to be like him, or to have that happiness in view which consists in the vision of him. This only belongs to its state after it is regenerate. When once a person comes to be a son, is brought into a state of sonship, and hath a divine nature imparted and communicated to him in regeneration; we see what his sense is, what a kind of happiness he is capable of relishing, and what, accordingly, his hope is, 1 John iii. 1. When the apostle had told us in the close of the foregoing chapter, "Every one that doth righteousness is born of God;" every one that hath the same holy nature, which belongs peculiarly, and in its highest perfection, to God alone; every one that hath any participation of that nature, doth thereby appear to be born of God; (or as the same matter is elsewhere otherwise expressed, to be of God;) why, that being supposed, in the beginning of the next chapter, he breaks out into that transport and admiration, wherein we find him introducing the matter that follows: "Behold, what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!" How come we to be called so? not as having a mere title, a name conferred upon us, and no more, but by having a new nature, a divine nature imparted. Adoption is founded in regeneration. There is no such thing as adoption that doth not presuppose regeneration, and the participation of a new, divine, holy nature from God.

Now, this being communicated, the happiness that such are hereupon capable of is, and so much (though we do not know what it will be in the perfect state fully yet) we do know concerning it, that we shall be like him, (as it there is,) "for we shall see him as he is." This they who are his regenerate sons, are capable of understanding, and relishing. And thereupon you see what their hope is; "every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, as he is pure." The hope that a regenerate person, a son, hath concerning him, is, that "he shall be like him, and see him as he is."

This is a very considerable difference; though there is a hope (as hath been said) that hath influence upon conversion and salvation itself, yet there is a hope that afterwards hath influence upon the Christian's perseverance through the whole of his after-course. These two do very greatly differ, according as the state of the case doth; the one being part of the new creature, or of the new man, or principle belonging to the new nature, which is now regenerated. The other may be only a human rational hope assisted by common grace, tending towards, and improvable in the methods of God's gracious communications unto the other, heightened up unto the other; so, whereas the principal exercise of the soul under these previous workings, which lead and tend to conversion, is taken up about a present peace and reconciliation with God; but its workings afterwards, under the influence of that nobler

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and more sublime hope, is taken up about a final felicity and blessedness in him; and so "rejoices in hope of the glory of God," as the matter is expressed, Rom. v. 2. and "obtaining of salvation by Christ Jesus, (1 Tim. ii. 10.) with eternal glory;" that being the thing whereunto such a one finds himself actually called. That cannot but be his hope, that is called to an everlasting kingdom, and the glory of God by and through Christ Jesus; the call proceeding from the God of all grace: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect," 1 Pet. v. 10. That which is the final term of his calling, is the hope of it, as the apostle speaks, where he prays for the Ephesians, that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that the eyes of their minds might be enlightened, and that "they might know the hope of his calling," Eph. i. 18. It is another kind of knowledge they are capable of having concerning the "hope of their calling," or what they are to hope for in the state to which they are called after regeneration, and which proceeds from that divine light which is suitable to a regenerate soul, as such. I say, it is quite another sort of hope from that, which it was capable of before; and so they are quite another sort of things about which the soul is exercised and taken up.

And, in short, that which a person once converted and brought home to God, is entertained and taken up with through the remaining part of his Christian course, is the future state of things; the invisible state. As he is to be saved by hope, (as the text speaks,) brought on to final salvation by the continual influence of hope; and to have this influence upon his whole course unto final salvation, is the immediate product of faith; the soul believes the word of God revealing such and such things that are out of sight, and that come not within the view of common eyes; and believing the word of promise, it hereupon hopes for the things promised, reacheth forth in vehement aspirings towards these things, and contends against the difficulties that lie in the way of attainment. And so we are told the holy soul, the just one, is to live by his faith, Heb. x. 37. And that we are told in the very beginning of the next chapter, is, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of the things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. Agreeably to what the text saith, "we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope." It is hope pitched upon unseen things, upon the invisible state of things by which a person is sustained, borne up through the whole of his course in this world, unto final salvation. "What a man sees, why doth he yet hope for?" It is a matter relating to an unseen state of things, the heavenly state, which is to influence a Christian all along till he reach heaven.

And so much being premised, I shall now for the clearing of this to you, (that as hope hath an influence, in order to conversion, so it hath afterwards a continual influence upon perseverance, unto final salvation,) do these two things; 1st, Show how, and in what way, hope hath this influence. And then, 2dly, Show you how necessary this influence is to this purpose; to wit, a Christian's perseverance; his holding on the prescribed course, till he reach the blessedness of it in salvation.

1. I shall show you what influence it hath, or how it comes to have influence, to this purpose. And whereas it is plain and evident, that hope cannot sustain a Christian in his course, if it be not sustained itself; I shall upon this head, more distinctly, do these two things; 1st, Show what advantages such hope, kept up in life and vigour in the soul, doth afford a Christian's continuing in his course, in the ways of God, till he reach the end of it; and then shall, 2dly, Show what encouragement a Christian hath so to hope; or what it is, whereupon all along his hope is to sustain itself, that it may sustain him.

1. For the former of these, What advantages such a hope, kept up in life and vigour, is apt to afford a Christian, for the continuing of him in his way, or that he may persevere unto the end. Here I shall let you see, that it hath influence upon the many gracious dispositions, which it is necessary should be, and should be continued in the soul, in order to its persevering in the way of life. I shall instance in such things as do most directly refer to this very purpose, the keeping of a person with God, in that holy course into which, by conversion, he hath been brought. As,

(1.) An habitual seriousness. This is a gracious temper and disposition of spirit, that conduceth greatly to perseverance, and which is continually influenced by hope. By a serious temper of spirit, I mean (as the thing itself doth sufficiently speak to any one's understanding) a considering temper of mind; that is, a serious mind or spirit, that can consider, and is apt to consider things; nothing is more necessary to a Christian's perseverance in his course. Apostacy and defection from God is never so likely to prevail, as when persons do begin to remit the intention of their minds, as to the considering of things which they are so much constantly concerned to consider, in reference to their present states God-ward, and their future and final state. When once the soul is relaxed and loosened from the objects, which it should be principally exercised and taken up about, then comes its danger. The unthinking soul falls into mischief, is liable to be caught by this, and that, and the other snare. If there be a disposition to ponder things, while a considering frame of spirit is preserved, the soul is safe. But what shall oblige it to consider those things that are most preservative of it, which have greatest aptness in them to its preservation, and its being kept from destructive snares? What can engage it hereunto, so probably and so strongly, as a continual, lively, vigorous hope?

You may see what that will signify to that purpose, by that of the apostle, "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end," 1 Peter i. 13. "Gird up the loins of your minds," a most emphatical expression, to signify a temper of spirit most intent upon consideration. Then is the soul in a considering posture, when the loins of your minds are girt up, when fluid thoughts are collected, as more fluid garments are collected, and bound about a man by a girdle: when the more volative thoughts are drawn in, and made to centre upon the things that we are more deeply concerned to consider. Then may we truly say, this soul is composed to a special sobriety. These expressions do expound one another, Gird up the loins of your minds and be sober; a mind girt up in its loins is a considering mind, and that lies in nothing more fitly and more truly, than in a certain sort of spiritual sobriety. And how is this influenced and maintained in the soul? Why, by a continual hope,—hope to the end. This is naturally so, that the hope we have of any design whatsoever, intends our minds, and collects them to the business: but if we have no hope, we are off from it. Whatsoever we have no hope of we abandon, we lay aside thoughts concerning it; it is to no purpose to consider, or think any longer about a business, in reference to which we have no hope. But as long as there is hope, there will be an agitation of thoughts, and the mind will turn itself this way and that, revolving things over and over. There will certainly, therefore, be a considering habit of mind preserved as long as hope remains in any liveliness and vigour, in reference to the great concerns of eternity that we have before us. And,

(2.) To our continuing in our course (if we be by conversion and regeneration brought into a truly Christian course) a steadfast resolution is of most constant necessity. That we may continue our course, we must be most steadfastly resolved that, through the grace of God, we will not be put out of our way. There must be a "cleaving to God, with full purpose of heart," Acts ii. 23. And it is plain that a continual hope must influence this resolution: Why will I not forsake this way? Why am I (with dependance upon the grace of God) resolved to persist in it, that nothing shall turn me out of it? Why I have a great hope before me, I hope for great things by persisting in this way. It is a way that leads to a blessed end, an end which the grace of God hath encouraged me to hope I shall in this way attain unto. The apostle exhorts the Colossians that they continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not moved from the hope of the Gospel, Col. i. 23. Why was this new faith (as it was a new thing in the world at that time) to be so steadfastly stuck unto? why must there be so resolved an adherence to it? Why, there is the highest, and greatest, and most glorious hope held up in view in that Gospel, or by that Gospel which is the object of this faith; and which therefore claims and challenges

this steadfast adherence to the thing which it represents. Therefore you are not to be moved from what is contained in the Gospel, because it contains the matter of so high a hope.

It is not tempting you by trifles, or shadows, by small or little things; it is your hoped advantage, lying in this Gospel that is now held up in view before you, which is to keep you unmoved. The object contains in itself the reason of the act, and the frame and disposition of the heart required in reference thereunto. And,

(3.) Love to God will certainly have a most powerful influence upon a Christian's perseverance;—I cannot leave the ways of God, because I love him, he hath won my heart, I cannot think of departing from those ways in which I have met with him, and an acquaintance hath been brought about between him and me. And nothing can signify more to preserve and keep alive the love of God in the soul, in strength and vigour, than such a hope God-ward. I hope I shall see him ere long, and be made perfectly like him, and see him as he is. And whence is this to be hoped for, but from gracious communications from himself? I know it must be from his mere kindness, a good-will to me, if ever I come to be finally happy in him, and enjoy him. The hope of so high and great things from him, how highly doth it endear him to us? Can I forsake that God, turn aside from following him or walking with him, from whom I hope for great things? "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as he is pure." He makes it his business, so to work out that sin, that is, a departing from God; (for that is the notion of sin, aversion from God, turning off from him;) the soul would be rid of that: and hope maintains and keeps alive the love of God in the heart. I still hope for more and more from him, and therefore still love him more and more: this holds the soul to him. "Experience begets hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost," Rom. v. 4, 5. We love him. Why? "Because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. What doth that mean? Is the meaning, that nobody loves God, till they are assured, or have assurance of his loving them? No, that cannot be, there is many a sincere lover of God that hath no assurance of his love. But what must it mean then? Why, that (at least) they have the hope of it; for it is most certain, that with absolute despair, there must be most conjunct, pure, unmixed hatred. If there be pure despair, there will be pure hatred:—nothing but hatred of God, where there is nothing but despair of his love. As it is in hell, there is despair in perfection, and so there is hatred in perfection, (as one may speak,) in that horrid kind. The meaning therefore can only be, "we love him, because he first loved us," to wit, because we hope so. It is not to be understood, that every one that loves God, hath an assurance that he is beloved of him: but he hath the hope of it, otherwise he could never love him; and if thereupon, the soul doth love him, then it saith, I must never leave him, I must cleave to him as long as I live, and for ever, through all time, and to all eternity: nothing shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord; nothing shall break those bonds. And most evident it is, that as that love is drawn out into continual exercise, it still doth, in all its exercises, run on with the exercise, and under the influence, of a continuing hope. I am still expecting greater things from him, and the more I expect, the more I love him; and the more I love him, the more I am resolved to cleave to him, and never to leave him. And,

(4.) Patience is another requisite to perseverance: and hope hath a manifest influence upon that. Patience is nothing else but a suffering power, an ability to suffer; by which our Saviour tells us, we possess our souls, that is, save them. It signifies indeed, both, present liberty, and final safety; and that that possession of our souls in patience, preserves them. Possession, in that two-fold sense, signifies liberty and self-dominion. He is subject to another's power, that can suffer nothing; but he is master of himself that can suffer. If he have an ability to suffer, then he keeps his self-dominion. He can be master of his own mind, of his own reason, of his own conscience, of his own judgment, of his own faith: but if he can suffer nothing, he must resign all, and admit another master, he must enjoy his own thoughts, his own sentiments, his own reason and his own conscience no longer. Thence comes apostacy, declension from God, his truths, his ways; I cannot suffer, I have no patience, no ability to suffer: then I must quit truth, holiness, and every thing, which, by my adherence to them, will expose me to the danger of suffering. But if there is patience, therein you possess your souls, you will thereby keep your liberty and self-dominion; so you secure to yourself final and eternal safety: and so keeping and possessing the soul, is in opposition to the final losing, or its being destroyed, and undone for ever.

And very plain it is, that hope is of most constant use and necessity, to the preserving and continuing this ability to suffer, this power of patience, or this passive power; nothing doth so much maintain it as hope. The occasion will not last always: I have the prospect of an end, and the hopeful prospect of a comfortable and good end. Therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust, or have trusted, (so we read it, but it is in the original, because we have hoped,) in the living God, 1 Tim. iv. 10.

What a strange sort of men are these, that will endure to be so exposed, so scorned, so trampled upon, as they that bear the Christian name commonly are! What is the reason of it? What account will a reasonable man give, why he will so expose himself? I will tell you the reason; therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we hope in God, in the living God, and we are pretty well persuaded we shall not finally be losers; we shall not have an ill bargain of it at last. As the same apostle, when he writes himself "an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ," seems to allow, that he was to doom himself to all the sufferings and calamities, that the enemies of the Christian cause could load him with, and lay upon him, for his assuming to himself such names of an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ. But why should Paul, that wise and prudent man, that learned man, that man of so considerable reputation among his own countrymen, why should he come to be written among the apostles and servants of Jesus Christ? Why, saith he, it is in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised, Titus i. 1, 2. I avow myself an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ upon this inducement, and for this reason, and so I mean to continue unto the end. It is the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised to me. He whose nature doth not allow him to deceive, to whom it is impossible to lie, I firmly and securely hope in him; and therefore I will readily dispose myself to encounter all the difficulties and hardships, which the service of Jesus Christ can lay me open to. Again,

(5.) Contentment with that portion and allotment which God affords us in this world, is another great preservative from apostacy, or requisite to perseverance. And this is very much maintained by hope. If persons decline, and turn off from the holy way of the Lord, it is generally this world that tempts them. "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world," 2 Tim. iv. 8. But if a man be well enough satisfied with the portion (whether it be more or less) which God hath alloted him of the good things of this world, then he is safe from temptation. But how shall he come to be satisfied with a lesser portion of the things of this world? Why, it is the hope of enough hereafter that satisfied him:—I have no great things now, nor do I matter that, I am not solicitous about it, I hope for greater and a better state.

What made Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, expose themselves to continued wandering, and to dwell in tents; when God had given them a country (one of the best in the world) by special grant, to have it as their inheritance, yet they lived as strangers, even in their own country, dwelling in tents; so as that they declared themselves pilgrims and strangers upon earth? What doth this signify and mean? Why, this declares plainly, that they seek a country, they hope and seek for a better country than all the world can afford them; (Heb. xi. 13.) therefore they tell the world, and tell it plainly, while we are upon earth, we are but pilgrims and strangers here; the world can tempt us with none of its baits: let the things it presents to our view, and makes us an offer of, be never so great, never so

special, they signify nothing with us, for every thing we can touch, that we can handle, or have to do with, smells of earth, and we are strangers and pilgrims here upon earth. And this was a plain declaration, their minds were higher, carried to somewhat in a higher region. They declare plainly, they are seeking a country. And what country is that? Why, a better and a heavenly country. And therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, Heb. xi. 16. It was the hope of those high and great things above, that drew up their hearts, and therefore this world could not entangle them.—Their way was above, (as the way of the wise is,) to escape from hell and death beneath. But it was hope that carried them up into those higher regions, so far out of the reach of deadly snares; the snares of death, as the wise man calls them. And again,

(6.) As contentment is a great preservative from the danger of apostacy, or a great requisite to perseverance; so is the desire of the better things of the better world, that better country, a very good preservative too. We must know that the spirit of man must of course, when it is drawn off from one sort of objects, apply and turn itself to another sort. It hath not its good within itself, it cannot be a deity, a god to itself; it must have a good to satisfy itself, *aliunde* out of itself. If it be not from this world that it looks for this good, it must find elsewhere that which may be more suitable and more grateful to it. Its desires, when they are confined, limited, and moderated by contentment, in reference to this world, are then removed and transferred to the things of the other world; and so it is kept in a steady, composed state. When it sees that the things of this world are not suitable, will not satisfy, it is not at a loss what it shall do next. A superior good presents and offers itself, and the new nature in it doth attemper, and suit its desires to that. And if it do desire things of that higher and upper region, it is in no danger of being drawn off from God, while that desire remains, lives, and flourisheth, and is in any power with it.

But now it so much the more desires, by how much the more it hopes; desire languisheth if hope fails, as it is in reference to any thing else, whereby as to the first appearance of good, it comes to its object. Is there any drawing forth of desire towards it, and we come to consider, and contemplate the matter, and we find it to be an unattainable thing, a thing to be despaired of, then we desert, desire fails, and grows flat of course. It is a thing rarely to be found, that desire remains in any vigour, to any object, in reference whereunto there is no hope, or in reference whereunto there is nothing but simple despair. Indeed, the first appearance, or view of goodness, or amiableness, in the object, may draw forth that which we call simple desire, so far as to put us upon the inquiry, is such a thing to be gained, yea or nay? And if we find it is not, desire fails, the hopelessness of the thing makes us lay aside the thoughts of it, and accordingly there is no more desire. If the desires of heavenly felicity live in our souls, this earth will never pluck us off from God; but that desire will last no longer than hope lasts, that such a state is not unattainable. We shall, by the grace of God, be enabled to reach the felicity of that state, we shall not be frustrated or disappointed at length:—then saith the soul, I will hold on my course. And then again,

(7.) Watchfulness is requisite to a Christian's continued progress in his course to final salvation. But there can be no such thing as watchfulness without hope. Watching imports a continual design, and of self-preservation; but when the hope of that fails, then all subordinate and subservient means are laid aside. But this is a thing enjoined us, in order to preservation, to watch always. And to this I might add,

(8.) Pray always too. This is requisite, as most conjunct with the other. And sure we are, as there can be no watching, so there can be no praying, without hope; this is most evident. And,

(9.) A complacential doing of good, or a disposition of doing good with complacency. This makes the ways of God pleasant to men, so as they will never leave them, nor turn aside from them: but it is hope that induceth them hereunto. It is a sowing to the Spirit, when we are doing good. The apostle calls it so. "They that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," Gal. vi. 8. Then immediately follows, "As ye have opportunity, do good unto all, especially to them that are of the house hold of faith." This is sowing to the Spirit suitably or subserviently to the kindness, and goodness, and benignity of the Divine Spirit. But whosoever sows, soweth in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope. That course of well-doing is continued, and the soul is held on in it, by the power and influence of a continued hope. "It is by patient continuance in well-doing, that we are to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, unto eternal life," Rom. ii. 7. I add again,

(10.) Fervency in a course of duty is a very great requisite to continuance in it. We shall soon grow weary of that course of duty, wherein we have no fervour in our own spirits. It is a wearisome thing to pray continually, without any fervour; and for such work as this we are now engaged in, to preach or hear, if there be nothing of fervour in us in these exercises, it is very dull work, and such as we shall not be well pleased to hold on long in; now it is plain, that hope maintains the fervour of the spirit in duty. "Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," (Rom. xii. 11, 12.) and "rejoicing in hope," are words immediately connected. And,

(11.) Christian temperance is a great thing to preserve us from apostacy. There is nothing that doth more effectually betray a soul into, and ingulf it in, final ruin, than the letting loose sensual inclinations. And you find it is the great design of the Gospel under which we live, and of the grace that appeareth in it, bringing salvation, "To teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Titus ii. 11, 12, 13. And how are we induced hereunto? "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." There is nothing that in common experience proves so fatal to many, that had begun well in a course of religion. Some hopeful young ones, that have been struck with convictions, God hath begun to awaken them, to take hold of their spirits; and they have had some tastes and relishes of the word of God, and of divine and heavenly things; but we have found them recede, and go off again. And how came it to pass? Why, they lost all in a debauch, that extinguished the convictions of conscience and the desires of heart that begun to be stirred in them God-ward and heaven-ward.

Now it is the hope of a soul which is its safety in this case. What? shall I lose so great a hope, for the pleasure of an hour, or a moment? It is because that I have great hope concerning this soul of mine, and concerning that vast, immense eternity, that is in view before me, and whereof I have the prospect, that I will not do so; I am born to great hopes, and therefore I will not destroy them by so mad a folly as this, to throw away a soul, and to throw away so great hopes, to please two or three fools, that would only have me go to hell in company with them, or to keep them company there. No, if persons have any apprehension, that God hath been at work with them, about the affairs of their souls, in reference to eternity, this may be the beginning of a new birth, of a divine birth; and if so, whatsoever parentage one is born of, his hopes are suitable to his parentage. If I am under the regenerating, divine influence, born, or shall be born, (if things come to a good issue,) a son of the greatest of fathers, a child of God: then if a child, an heir, an heir of God, and joint-heir of Christ. Then how high and great are my hopes! How glorious expectancies are those that I have in prospect before me! And what? to lose all this for the pleasure of a debauch? It is hope that makes the mind sober, (as was before hinted,) "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end." That you may be sober, that you may have sobriety of mind, of thinking, and of judging reasonably of things, keep hope in exercise; do but consider what you hope for, and you will be safe. And lastly,

(12.) Joy is a great requisite to perseverance, and will be of great use to us, in order thereunto. "The joy of the Lord is his people's strength," (Neh. viii. 10.) to carry them through the duties and difficulties of the Christian state. And how is that joy to be maintained? "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God," (Rom. v. 2.) and our rejoicing

is to be in hope, Rom. xii. 12. It is hope that feeds joy in reference to things, while we are in this present state which doth not afford much of immediate enjoyment, otherwise than that we have by anticipation. It is hope that directs to that which is within the veil, (Heb. vi. 19.) takes hold of invisible things, and so is as "an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast." The soul rejoiceth to find itself upon sure terms, rejoiceth in hope, in the strength and power of that hope, which, as its anchor, is thrown within the veil, and takes hold of the unseen things there. "The God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing," (Rom. xv. 13.) as the apostle prays for the Christian Romans. The more joy, the more vigour in your course, the joy of the Lord will be your strength; and the more hope, the more joy.

You see these many ways hope cannot but have an influence unto Christians' perseverance in the way and course, into which regeneration and converting grace hath brought them.

The next thing will be to show you, what encouragements a Christian hath thus to hope for, while his hope is to be sufficient for him all along in his course, something or other must be sufficient unto it, something or other must sustain it, that doth sustain him.

SERMON XIX.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

HAVING shown what advantages hope gives a Christian's progress in his way, we now come to let you see what ground a Christian hath for such a hope, to wit, that by the grace of God, and the assistance to be given continually from him, he shall be kept and preserved from the great danger of fatal, destructive backsliding and apostacy from God, and a departure from his ways; from turning aside into crooked paths, with the workers of iniquity: (Psal. cxxv. 5.) and from returning into those ways at length, "which take hold of hell, and lead down to the chambers of death," Prov. v. 5. But before I come to show you what ground a serious Christian hath for such a hope, something I must premise unto you. As,

1. That the grounds which he had for his former hope before his conversion, and which had influence thereupon, do still remain, and are equally grounds to him of this continuing hope that is to influence his whole after-course, and with much more advantage. We are not to suppose that the grounds of the hope that I am now speaking of, do make the former grounds cease. The grounds of the former hope, that which I told you might be only (and indeed must be before conversion) no more than a rational human hope, assisted by common grace; what ground there was for that hope doth still remain, and is still improvable to more advantage: and the grounds of this following hope are not, in reference to those grounds, privative, but cumulative, (as is wont to be said in such cases,) that is, they do not take away the former, but add thereunto. Whatsoever ground of hope there was before, for a poor wandering sinner to return, and come back to God, and seek reconciliation and peace with him, to wit, from the gracious nature of God, from the rich fulness of Christ's sacrifice, from the freeness of the Gospel tender, and invitation, and from the power, and grace, and office of the Holy Ghost: these grounds do still remain, in reference to the present case, and are improvable, even with more advantage, as you will see in reference thereunto. And again,

2. This is to be noted by way of premise, That the hope which they are to take encouragement for, is not to be a ash, fearless hope. It is not to be a hope without fear, pray do not mistake the matter as to this, we are not to aim at any such hope as shall be exclusive of fear, or that shall make that a useless thing, a useless principle, a useless grace in the soul. We are told, "They are blessed that fear always; (Prov. xxviii. 14.) but he that hardens his heart, (that is, in opposition to such a fear,) shall fall into mischief." And elsewhere we find such oppositions of fear to hardness of heart, made to one another. "Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear?" Isa. lxiii. 17. and we are directed to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 3. and warned "not to be high-minded, but fear," Rom. xi. 20. and charged "to work out our salvation, with fear and trembling," Phil. ii. 12. Even they are so charged, whom the apostle had a little before expressed his confidence concerning them, that "God that had begun a good work in them, would perfect it unto the day of Christ," Phil. i. 6. And yet he requires and charges them in his name, and by his authority, whom God had exalted to so high a pitch, as to give him a name above every name, wherefore, (saith he hereupon,) this charge I solemnly give you, that his name and authority may be owned, not only in "my presence, but much more, being absent, you work out your salvation, with fear and trembling."

There is no such state of a Christian attainable in this life, that ought to make fear a useless thing, and to supersede it. I say there is no such state as this; no, nor undoubtedly in heaven itself, where reverence of God is higher than now we are capable of, infinitely, unspeakably, exceedingly higher. It will be part of that homage, that we shall be eternally paying to his throne, and part of our felicity too, because of the pleasantness of that temper, the suitableness and congruity of it to a right mind, apprehensive of what is due to the Eternal Being; and besides, we are told this is the very means of our preservation. He that hath promised to keep his, hath promised to keep them thus, "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." I mean to make use of that as the great preservative principle in them, Jer. xxxii. 40. Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

Indeed the understanding of all this doth but depend upon one plain thing, that it is fit and needful that every one should have a distinct notion of in his own mind, to wit, how vast the difference is between fear and fear;—the fear of reverence, and the fear of horror, (as I may fitly enough distinguish it,)—the fear of a saint, and the fear of a devil:—the fear of heaven, and the fear of hell;—so vastly different they are. The one fear doth involve hatred in it essentially *odiumus quem mehamus*, we hate him whom we so fear, we cannot but do so; but the other doth essentially carry love in it. The fear of reverence carries a complacency in the dignity, honour, and exaltation of him, towards whom we exercise this affection; and yet it hath a collateral and secondary respect to our own interest too, and so ought to have, and must have; as the love we bear to God, and our true love to ourselves; the love by which we design glory to him, and the love by which we design blessedness in him, are the same love. That therefore is a further thing, that thereupon we are to consider. Again,

3. We must hereupon note this too, That the hope unto which we are to be encouraged of being kept from apostacy, and enabled to persevere, and hold on in the ways of God to the end, it must consequently be such as shall admit of, as shall not exclude, but infer all the subsequent cares and endeavours, that are most agreeable and correspondent to such a fear, as hath been before expressed, to wit, our continual watchfulness over ourselves, our abstaining from known gross evils, our endeavour to repress the beginnings, the first motions and stirrings of sin, our giving ourselves to prayer, our meditating upon the things of God, our attending duty, and waiting on God in his ordinances, our avoiding temptations, and shunning the society of them that walk in pernicious and destructive ways. Our hope of being kept, it must not exclude, but infer, all this care and endeavour of our own, in order to our being so kept. As a man's hope of having his natural life, and health, and strength, and soundness preserved, ought to be with a conjunct care of himself all along. It were a mad hope, if a man should then hope that his life, strength, and soundness, should be preserved, if he starve himself, or stab himself, or poison himself, or run into houses infected with

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the plague, or associate himself with persons that have pestilential diseases upon them, and the like: this were a mad hope, that I should be kept well at this rate. And it is easily apprehensible how this is to be applied to our present case; we are to hope we shall be kept, but we are not to hope we shall be kept in a continual neglect of ourselves; if we will famish and starve our souls, if we will stab them in a liberty of known acts of sin, if we will infect them by running into contagious company, if we will associate with such, and familiarly converse with them, that have the plague upon them, if we are not afraid of drawing contagion from so mortal breath, our hope will be a very foolish hope, and not the hope I am now to encourage. And,

4. We must note further, that, supposing that many, or any be in doubt whether they have yet a holy, good principle in them; whether they are yet come into the regenerate state, have that already inlaid in them, which the Scripture calls the seed of God, and a divine nature; if (I say) any be in doubt about it, it is not needful that they should stay for a resolution, in order to the receiving any encouragement from what I am further to say; though they cannot so certainly say that the things that are after to be said do concern them as regenerate persons, as those that are already in a state of grace: yet they will find that there may be encouragement taken from thence, though not so directly in order to the bringing of them into it; and so none should think that what is said doth no way concern them, because they are not yet certain that they are regenerate.

Whatsoever is received, is received according to the disposition of the recipient. If there be a regenerate principle, that will so much the more readily entertain and close with what is spoken for its own strengthening, and further invigorating, and for its nutriment. But if there be not, yet if there be a tendency that way, any seriousness of spirit about any such thing, and with reference thereunto we must know that is a true maxim in spirituals, as well as in naturals, *Eisdem nutrimur exquibus constamur;* we are nourished, and do consist of the same thing, the very same thing. And that which is suitable to the maintaining, enlivening, improving, and growth of a principle of divine life in the soul, is suitable, in some measure, to the begetting of it too. Even the same word, in the sum and substance of it, by which we are to grow, and which we are to receive as "sincere milk," for that design, that we may grow, and may be strengthened by it; by the same word, also, are we "begotten again by the word of truth," James i. 17. And by "the incorruptible seed," the "word of God," 1 Pet. i. 20. "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth;" John xvii. 17.

Now these things being thus forelaid, all that I shall say for the encouragement of such a hope as I am now speaking of, will be reduced, and is fitly enough reducible, one way or other, to this one ground, the Gospel of the covenant of God in Christ. That lays before you the firm and sure foundation of such a hope; and it will indeed somewhat diversely give encouragement according to the different states of men, (though principally I intend now the regenerate state,) if you do but accordingly consider the different notions under which we may look upon this covenant; in short, we may look upon it either as proposed, or as actually entered. As proposed, so it gives a ground of hope to enter it; and thereupon gives a ground for all the consequent hope whereof I am speaking.

But if it be actually entered, and that can be distinctly and with clearness reflected upon, then you have the nearer, the more immediate, the firmer and surer ground, for such a hope as I am now to speak of. And your hope ought to arise to proportionable degrees of life, strength, and vigour in you. But the great foundation of this hope lies here in the Gospel covenant, whoever of you have any concern for your souls; whoever of you are bethinking yourselves how not to perish, how at length to be saved; lo, here you lay your hope upon the Gospel covenant, the covenant of God in Christ.

For do but consider, that the apostle, speaking of the case of the infidel pagan world, and of the case of the Ephesians, when they were such, he saith, "Ye were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise; and without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world," Ephes. ii. 12. All the while that you were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and from the covenant of promise; all the while that you were as a people of another country, (as the expression signifies,) in being "strangers to the covenant of promise, and without Christ;" you were without hope too, and "without God in the world;" atheists in the world.

The ground of the Christian's hope as to perseverance, is the Gospel covenant, Christ being the great agent that was to bring about a relation; and in order thereunto to bring you into covenant with God through himself. If you know nothing of the covenant of promise, you are without hope. This is the sum of all; here must your hope be laid, upon this great foundation.

And this is not a new thing, but as old as faith hath been in the world, and as holiness hath been, or any thing hath been of the divine life. This covenant of God in Christ, it is said even to be but confirmed when the law was given by Moses on mount Sinai; the covenant that was confirmed of God in Christ to Abraham. It was even confirmed before to Abraham; it received a new confirmation there; it was not made with Abraham then, Gal. ii. 16. It was then but confirmed to Abraham. This covenant of God in Christ being of a much more ancient date. David, when he lay a dying, here was the ground of his hope; "Thou hast made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although thou make it not to grow;" (2 Sam. xxxiii. 5.) to wit, his house, spoken of before, "although my house be not so with God." God had said many things to him about his house and family heretofore, a great deal more distinctly and expressly than he doth usually to men about their houses and families, when they are to be extinct and gone. But David's mind was upon something else,—something greater and more considerable than all this; "Although my house be not so with God, (come of my house and external concernments what will,) here is "all my salvation, and all my desire," that thou hast "made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;" which had an aspect upon higher and greater things than that of a temporal kingdom in this world, how big soever that may look in many an eye.

And, concerning David's understanding and knowledge in the mystery of Christ, (as I may use those words well enough in reference to him,) when we hear him speak so often of his hoping in the word of God, this must be the word which he is to be understood principally to mean, the word of this everlasting covenant; "I had fainted for thy salvation, but I hoped in thy word," Psal. cxix. 49. Intent he was upon salvation; and sometimes being ready to faint about it, his hope in God's word kept him from fainting; "Thou art my hiding-place and my shield," Psalm cxix. 114. I do hope in thy word. You have that which is agreeable, in another place, where he again professeth his hope in God's word, and invites all Israel to join with him in waiting for the Lord, (Psalm cxxx. 6, 7.) from day to day, more than that they wait for the morning; "Let Israel wait on the Lord, for with him is mercy and plenteous redemption, and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities." This is the summary thing, the Gospel of the covenant of God in Christ, which is the great ground and foundation of this hope.

But to speak more particularly and distinctly to it, you will have several grounds of hope some way or other reducible hither, if you will but consider sundry things that we have to reflect upon relating and belonging to this covenant. As,

1. The Author of this covenant is to be considered. It is God's own covenant; he is not only a covenanting party, but he hath formed the covenant, and is the first in the covenant. It is he that hath ordained and contrived the model of it; and doth propose it to us, and enjoin it upon us, as to what is our part in this covenant of God in Christ. And concerning him, though I might insist upon many things, I shall only mention these two, to show how firm a ground of hope you have from the Author of this covenant, to wit, his all-sufficiency, and his faithfulness.

(1.) His all-sufficiency. When he was drawing Abraham into the covenant, or designing to confirm him in a covenant state, so he mentions himself, I am God all-suf-

ficient; that was enough for his part. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," (Gen. xviii. 1.) that would be also enough for Abraham on his part; as you know, if you have occasion to transact affairs with a man, to contract a covenant with him about matters of importance to you, the great thing you will have your eye upon is, Is the person I deal with sufficient? If you are sure that he is, you traffic with much more security, he being a man of known sufficiency. Saith God, I am an all-sufficient God; come, who hath a mind to deal with me? to transact with me, and traffic with me? who will come into my covenant? And,

(2.) His faithfulness is a most firm foundation of hope: such faithfulness as wherewith consists no possibility of being false; "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised," Tit. i. 2. "And by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, the heirs of promise might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them," Heb. vi. 17, 18. You say you shall one day sink, you shall fail, you shall perish, you shall be lost after so many stops in the ways of God. Think who hath promised you. The God, all-sufficient: and that he is faithful that hath promised.

And consider these things in reference to one another, his faithfulness to his all-sufficiency: he is therefore faithful because he is all-sufficient. It is a great matter, rightly to understand this. It is impossible to the perfection of the Divine nature to lie, because he is God all-sufficient. Honesty, veracity, and truth, are not things of so ill repute among men, but that men would preserve their credit in the world, if they were not put to shifts, if they were not reduced to straits. They are commonly false, because they know not how to compass their ends; either they have not wisdom enough, or they have not power enough; but he that is all-sufficient hath nothing to tempt him to falsehood. His perfect nature abhors it;—his all-sufficiency speaks his universal perfection, as you have formerly, at another season, been told. The matter is obvious, if we do but allow ourselves to argue upon it, (though indeed the thing little needs it,) even upon grounds that will be clear to every body.

There is no intelligent agent that doth any thing without design. As an intelligent agent, every human action is done for an end, for a proposed end. He that is the most perfectly intelligent Being, can do nothing but for some end. Now what end can he propose to himself to deceive a creature that he made out of nothing, but the other day, and can throw into nothing, the next moment, if he pleaseth? What end can he propose to himself, in deceiving a creature that he hath absolutely in his own power? Those words of our Saviour, how much of spirit and life do they carry in them! "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; If it were not so, I would have told you." You may trust me; do you think I intended to make fools of you, when I persuaded you to be Christians? Have I made you leave all this world, and made you give up yourselves to me, and put yourselves under my conduct, in expectation of great and glorious things hereafter, in another state? I tell you it is as I have said, "In my Father's house there are many mansions, and if it were not so, do you think I would not have told you?" would not I have been honest to you? would I have cheated you into a vain and false hope? so much reason you have to believe me from my word, that you may even believe from my silence; "if it had not been so, I would have told you;" I never yet said to you, shift for yourselves, I have never a heaven for you, I have never a ground of eternal hope for you: all that is banished and gone. "No, if it were not so," as I say, "I would have told you." The divine all-sufficiency, and his fidelity, taken together in the consideration we have of him, as the great Author of his covenant, upon which you must depend for eternity, how firm a foundation of hope is this! and whatever of encouragement it gives to them who have entered this covenant, and can say, This God is now in covenant with me, and I in covenant with him. They have proportionable encouragement who are invited to enter it, for if I close with this offer, this is my case presently, and I have the same interest that any other hath had before me, who hath entered into it before. But again,

2. Consider the Mediator of this covenant. It is a covenant established in the hands of a Mediator, contracted by a Mediator, on purpose that it might be sure and firm; that it might have more stability, and might better hold than that covenant made with God immediately, or without a Mediator coming between God and man. And we are to consider Christ the Mediator of this covenant, as giving stability to it, and giving us ground of firm hope from it, under a three-fold notion, to wit, As dying for us; As living in us; And as gone into heaven before us.

1. Consider him as dying for us. And if his death be considered in respect to this covenant, so it may be looked upon two ways, as *principium essendi*, and as *principium cognoscendi*; it may be looked upon as a ground of the being of this covenant, and it may be looked upon as a ground of the knowledge of it, that knowledge which we may have concerning it; both which are necessary to be the foundation of our hope.

(1.) As a ground of the being of this covenant. If it had not been for the death and sacrifice of the Son of God, there could not have been such a covenant, Psalm l. It is a covenant by sacrifice. As covenants have their ratifications, even among men, by sacrifice, and the Jews have a notion *de sanguine sancita sunt non abroganda*, those arguments that are ratified by blood, become most sacred and inviolable, never to be abrogated. The blood of Christ is called the blood of the covenant again and again: "And have counted the blood of the covenant an unclean thing," Heb. x. 29. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself to God, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect," Heb. xiii. 20, 21. And when he instituted his own supper, he calls it the cup of the new testament in his blood. The word testament is the same used for covenant. How firm a covenant is that, that hath its foundation in the blood of the Son of God! His blood, who is the great Emmanuel, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," who came down on purpose into this world, and united himself with the nature of man, purposely that he might have somewhat mortal about him, somewhat that could die, and that by that death of his, he might ruin the designs of him that had the power of death; and might procure that stability should be given to the covenant of life and peace, even this covenant. And then,

(2.) The death of Christ is not only a principle, or ground of the being of this covenant, but of our knowledge of it too; upon which also depends our hope therein; that is, we know, being informed concerning the death of Christ, how it comes to pass that there can be such a contract and agreement between an offended God and offending creatures. How comes it to pass? how was it brought about? Why, God hath set him forth, "to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness; (to testify to all the world his righteousness;) that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus," Rom. iii. 25. This powerfully controls the objection of any unbelieving heart. How can it be, that the just and holy God, and glorious Majesty of heaven, should be offended by an impotent worm, and should threaten death for the offence and yet forgive it? How can it be? Why, God hath set forth his Son, to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness, to let all the world know, that now he can righteously pardon sin, and be reconciled to sinners, and take them into favour. What an encouragement is this to a returning soul, a returning soul, a soul that hath returned, or that hath a disposition or mind to return! God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, he lifted him up upon the cross, and he is lifted up in the Gospel dispensation, to tell the world, Now, sinner, the matter shall not lie on me, or on my part; if there be still a breach between me and thee, it is not because I cannot be reconciled, but because thou wilt not be reconciled; I can be reconciled, I have my satisfaction in my Son, and if there be a continuing breach, it is because thou refusest, and despisest the terms of peace that are offered, and dost trample upon the blood of the covenant, as if it were a profane thing. But to a serious considering soul, one that hath returned, or is upon his return to God in Christ, how

firm a foundation of hope is this! I know the justice of God, (the only thing I had to dread, as that could never be reconciled to me,) is satisfied if I return, and shall never have any quarrel with me, if I keep on in the prescribed way that leads to life. Saith the apostle, "Abide in him, (that is, in Christ, who is the great reconciling sacrifice,) that when he shall appear, you may have confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming," 1 John ii. 20. But then,

2. Consider Christ the Mediator of this covenant, as living in us, as well as dying for us. He gives stability to this covenant, and so is the ground-work of our hope, as he hath been pleased to unite himself with our souls and take up an indwelling and abode there. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love, may comprehend with all saints the height, and breadth, and depth, and length; and may know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge," Eph. i. 3, 17, 18, 19. He testifies his own love by his indwelling presence, and that way he secures you, that the covenant remains stable and firm between God and you. I dwell in you, to keep this always a clear and indubitable thing with you, that God is yours and you are his, by the tenor of his own covenant. And again, you are to look upon Christ in reference to this covenant,

3. As ascended, and having entered the heavens on our behalf, upon our account, together with all that is connected therewith, and consequent thereupon. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, and is at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii. 33, 34. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1. So he is said to mediate for us, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life, Heb. vii. 18. And it is said, "He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Being seated and enthroned in glory, with that very design, that though there may be many offences on our part against the tenor of our covenant, yet they shall not make a final breach; but that still the returning soul shall find mercy, and that still that mercy shall be free. "Return, ye backsliding children, for I am married to you, I will heal your backslidings, and receive you graciously, and love you freely," Jer. iii. 12, 14, 22. I might add,

4. The immediate Agent for bringing of souls into this covenant state, and continuing them there. And how great a ground have you of hope from thence; that is, that the Holy Spirit is appointed purposely by office, to transact this affair with souls; at first to bring them into covenant with God in Christ, and then, from time to time, to confirm their standing, and preserve them in the covenant state. This is that to which he is appointed, to which his very office leads to; that which we find him concerned to do, not occasionally, not on the by, but *ex officio*. A greater ground of hope cannot be conceived than this. How intent is God upon it, that his covenant with souls shall be a firm, stable, continual thing!

SERMON XX.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

IT remains now to show you, that the influence which hope hath to this purpose, it is not merely necessary to a Christian's better progress in his way and course, but to his progress at all, to any progress which he could make in such a course; to wit, it is not only requisite to the better being, but to the being itself, of continued Christianity, so that without hope, there would certainly be a failure; and God who hath absolutely determined this end, (that his elect shall hold out through the whole of their course,) hath also determined this means, *viz.* that he will preserve and maintain that hope in them throughout, by which they shall be enabled to hold out to the end: and therefore the certainty of the necessity of the influence of hope to that purpose, is what we have now to make out to you. And in order thereunto, we need but to consider in general, 1st, The course of our own operations, such as are internal, and wherein our spirits within us do exert their power and vigour day by day. And then, 2dly, to consider the special and most natural and proper work of hope. If we do but consider our own nature, and most connatural operations; and if we do but consider the nature of hope, and what its special and connatural work is, it will be plain, that such a continued course could not be held, but by the influence of hope.

1. Let us reflect upon the proper connatural operations of our own spirits. This will be of real use to us, not only as it serves the present purpose, but as it may give us a clearer and more distinct notion of ourselves, which we do need to have our minds furnished with. There are many that do use this body, (for a whole life-time that they live in it,) and the several parts and members that do belong to it, they do their proper offices with them day by day, and yet seldom, or ever, allow themselves to make a reflection, what a sort of creature is this body of mine? and how, and by what means, do the several parts of it serve for those several purposes for which I use them daily? Among all those that do use the body, and the several organs and instruments of action that do belong to it, how seldom do the most that do so, ever take notice what a sort of structure this is, and how it comes to be framed for such uses as the several parts of it serve for! That argues a great deal of stupidity among us, that we should move our hands, and feet, and eyes, as we do from day to day, and never consider with ourselves how these come to be moving things, or which way, or by what means, they are moved; as to think of the many instruments of this body that serve the purposes of motion, with what curiosity all those muscles are contrived and framed, without which there could be no motion, and which if there were not such variety of them, there would not be that variety of motion that we find, so many several muscles, no less than six belonging to each eye, that it may be capable of moving this way and that way, upward, downward, obliquely, and transversely. There could be no motion, if there were not such instruments lodged and placed on purpose to subserve this end.

And as little do the most consider the movements of their own spirits, of their inward man; what kind of inducements they are that the mind of man is carried by, this way and that; how it is enabled to form designs and to contrive methods for the accomplishment of them, and to take such and such courses to bring them about. We use these noble powers and faculties every day, which we never consider, never contemplate. If we did allow ourselves to reflect and look a little inward upon ourselves, especially upon the powers of our own minds and spirits, and consider how they come to be engaged in action, this way and that, it were impossible but that such contemplation as that would carry up our souls to adore their own Father, the Father of spirits, and the Father of lights: He that had the fashioning of the spirit of man within him, and who doth order the course and current of all its motions, together with the inducements by which it should be made capable of moving this way and that, with so singular and profound wisdom, as that, if we did but more in this respect consider ourselves, we could not but more admire him.

But this is plain and evident, that whether you look upon the spirit of a man as rational, or as regenerate and holy, it cannot but move towards an end. There is nothing that a man doth as a man, no human action, (as such,) but is done for an end. And there is no end that any can propose to himself, but under the notion of attainable; and there is nothing that a man can design or project as attainable, but it must be also inasmuch as it is attainable and hopeful; hopeful, inasmuch as hope hath reference to that which is good, and that which is future; inasmuch as that which one proposeth to himself, under the notion of

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an end, must be a good. That which is apprehended as an evil, we avert, we shun, we fly from naturally, by the natural constitution of our own souls; and that which we apprehend as good, we pursue and press towards it. Hope having for its object only that which is good, and that which is future, a distant good that I am not possessed of yet. It is impossible I can propose any thing to myself as my end, but at the same time, when I make it my end, I make it the object of my hope; and while I am pursuing it, all the series and course of the actions which I do in the pursuit and prosecution of it, I do continually, as having my mind all along influenced and animated by the hope of attaining it; for if I did not hope, I would give it over, never make one step more towards it. That whereof I simply despair, I must by the necessity that my own reason lays upon me, (as I am a reasonable creature,) give it over, and do no more towards it.

This is the state of things with man as he is a reasonable creature. Look upon his soul as it is rational; thus it is with him; and look upon it as regenerate and holy, that spoils nobody's intellectuals. A man is not less rational for being regenerate, but the more; it mends his intellectuals. Them that were before foolish, and deceived, and disobedient, and serving divers lusts and pleasures, when by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, they are (as it were) new made; now they recover their understanding, and a rectitude of mind to that degree, that they now act more like men than ever they did before. And therefore, whether you look upon the soul of man as rational, or as regenerate, the influence of hope is of most absolute necessity to his pursuing any end or design whatsoever. But then,

2. If you do also consider the nature of hope, and its most proper and connatural work, to wit, to bear up the soul in a continual conflict with the difficulties it meets with, or is liable to meet with, in the way to its end. Therefore (as I told you before) as the objects of hope is somewhat good and future, so it is also attended with difficulty. So moralists usually give the notion of hope, and add that as the proper distinction of it from mere desire; for the object of desire is also somewhat good and future, appearing to be good and at a distance. If it were good, and not future, it would be the object of delight and joy; that is the exercise of the soul towards a present good, and wherewith it hath actual union already. But a distant good, both that which is apprehended to be in itself good and desirable and good for me, and which is at a distance, the affection that the soul exerciseth towards it, is desire, unto which if you superadd that further character of the object, to wit, an arduousness and difficulty of attaining the thing I purpose to myself, then it becomes the object of hope. It is the proper and connatural work of hope to contend with difficulty in attaining, or in the way towards the attaining that good, which we propose to ourselves to enjoy.

Therefore now, this being the office and work of hope, its proper and specifying work, that by which it is distinguished from mere desire, to cope and contend with difficulties that lie in the way of attaining my end; the many difficulties that do fall into the course of a Christian, do give him that constant exercise through the whole of his course, that if there be not a hope maintained in him, proportionable to those difficulties, and that may enable him to keep on the conflict with them, the whole design of Christianity must needs be laid aside, and given up. It is not possible, that according to the constitution of the human nature, (and especially taking it in its regenerate state, which makes it so much the more reasonable and intelligent thing, than it was before,) I say, it is impossible it could hold on that course, were it not by the influence of this hope.

And that leads me to consider, particularly, the many difficulties that occur in the course of a Christian, which are only superable by that principle of divine hope which God hath planted in him for this very purpose, to keep him in that course which he himself hath prescribed to him, and which leads to that glorious, blessed end, his own salvation.

I shall but mention to you, to this purpose, some of the greater and more observable of those difficulties which a Christian's hope is to contend with, and must conquer for him, that he may be finally saved. As,

Difficulty 1. The invisibility of those objects, about which he is to be principally exercised through the whole of his course. When this is the state of one's case, that the objects wherewith we must have most of all to do; and wherein the sum of our felicity lies, and from whence all our present vigour and liveliness, and the continued strength of our souls for all the exercises of the Christian life, is to be drawn forth; when they are all things that lie quite out of sight with us, what should a man do in this case if it were not for hope? That hope which has a preapprehension of such things, and makes a representation of them to me, though they are unseen things. Herein lies the peculiarity and glory of hope, that it can do so. With that sort of objects doth its chief business lie. As in the remaining part of this verse, "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" If there were not such a principle and power in a Christian as hope, referring to things unseen, whereas all his support, and all his vigour, and the liveliness of his spirit, through the whole of his course, must be derived and drawn from such things, what would become of him, if he had not that principle in him, by which he could converse with things that are out of sight?

You have been formerly told, that hope, in all its exercises with reference to the final felicity of a saint, it grounds upon faith. I first believe the divine word, and that word becomes to me a clear and vivid representation of all things whereby the soul goes forth, in all the power of hope, to contend forwards towards them. It reaches forth to them by hope, when once it hath believed the reality and truth of them by faith. And so you come to have these two twisted together. Their object is the same, and their exercises conjunct, though they are distinct. "Faith is the substance (the hypostasis) of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1.

To tell a Christian that hath engaged in a new and distinct way from that which is held by the universality of men besides, "You are now launched out upon a peculiar bottom of your own, pray what are the things that you design to entertain yourself with from day to day through the whole of your course? Why, they are things (saith he) that lie quite above this sphere,—things quite out of sight to you, and things that are quite out of sight to myself, as to any such eye as is common to me and to you. But, then, how will you come at these things?—What commerce have you with them? Why, I have that hope within me, grounded upon a steadfast belief of the Divine revelation of such things as I am sure cannot deceive me, by which my view of these is as clear as the things that are seen are clear to your view. And I should disdain to have my principal converse with them, or that they should be the chief object of the exercise of this soul of mine, now by Divine grace renewed, filled with new light, and with new inclinations, if they were not things of that peculiar and distinct kind that they are of, that is, invisible. If they were things that could be seen; if they were things that lay obvious to the notice of so mean a principle as your sense is, they would be too base things for me, I could not tell how to warrant myself, to justify myself; I could not answer it to myself, much less to him that hath given me the new law that I am to be governed by, if I should longer confine myself to so mean things: but because they are things not to be seen, quite out of sight, therefore doth my soul choose that noble employment, to be taken up about these things peculiarly from day to day. If they were not so high as to be quite out of sight, they were too low and too mean for me." So saith the renewed soul.

But here is a difficulty not superable by any thing but a divine hope; that the best of the things which the soul is to be conversant about, and taken up with every day, lie quite out of sight; what could we do in such a case, if it were not for such a hope as can see, and discern, and anticipate, and give a preventive enjoyment of things that cannot be seen? And,

Difficulty 2. The suitableness and gratefulness of things of sense, of sensible things, is another great difficulty, that

our hope is continually to conflict with, and to carry the Christian over. Things that are more suitable to an animal life and the sensible nature; they are things that lie under view continually; they are present and obvious; they are pleasing and entertaining to the sensitive nature that we carry about with us. And yet the soul must be under continual restraint as to whatsoever complacential relishes it can ever take in such things. Here lies the difficulty; here are things suitable and pleasing to sense, to flesh and blood; and in reference to these things the soul can exert no desire, no delight; can take no grateful complacency in them, but is under continual restraint. The regenerate soul cannot wallow in sensual pleasures; it may not do so; it hath a law laid upon it, and a law put into it, by which it finds itself to be under a prohibition. And therefore is this sort of men a wonder to the rest of the world; they think it strange they do not run with them "into the same excess of riot," 1 Pet. iv. 4. They cannot allow themselves to be sensual with the fleshly, worldly with the worldly, covetous with the covetous. If they do, they call their own state and standing in Christ under dreadful suspicions. If they can be ambitious, and covetous, and voluptuous, men grossly voluptuous, they draw their state into question. But what is it that restrains them, and composes them to a holy kind of severity in this respect, but the power of divine hope? "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end," 1 Pet. i. 13. Here appears the necessary influence of this hope to preserve a just restraint on the soul through the whole of our course, while our way lies amidst so many sensible things, that are so entertaining and tempting to our natures. We are to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Tit. ii. 11, 12.

It must be considered, that regeneration and the participation of the new nature (as I have told you before) did not spoil any man's reason, nor his intellectuals; so, nor doth it spoil his sensitive faculties neither. Such a one you must understand still to have as good senses as other men have, and senses as apt to entertain and please themselves, on proper suitable objects, as other men. Do you think they cannot taste the relishes of meats and drinks, as well as others can, or what else may be pleasing and grateful to the bodily sense? But they may not, they are under a restraint; they must converse shyly and cautiously, and with great circumspection, with all such kind of objects. And what doth enable them to do so? They are enabled to be sober, because they "hope continually,"—hope on to the end "for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ;" and their "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." And in the power of that hope they live, not only righteously and godly, but soberly, in this present world.

Though that is an argument, indeed, of the general languor of Christianity at this day, and particularly of Christian hope, that greater latitudes are commonly taken among those that profess religion, in these our days, than have been heretofore. And it is sad to think it should be so as to meats and drinks, and apparel, and whatsoever borders upon luxury. Truly reformed Christendom is not itself; England is not itself; London is not itself; the families of persons professing godliness are not what they were in these respects. And certain it is, by how much more sensual inclination doth prevail, Christian hope doth proportionably so much the more languish. And,

Difficulty 3. Another difficulty, that the hope of a Christian has to contend with, is his foregoing all that he hath in this world for Christ's sake, whensoever he is thereunto called, by the concurrence of Christian precepts with present providences. When those so state his case to him, as that it comes to this present posture; things stand thus with him, and towards him, as they lie under his present view in such a juncture. "I must now disobey Christ, or I must lose and forego what is most desirable and delectable to me in this world, it may be, this very life itself. So hath the Divine rule, and the Divine providence, taken together, stated my case, as to bring matters to this pinch, this necessity. I must forsake all, abandon whatsoever is most pleasing to me in all this world, even life itself, if that be required and called for upon the same terms."

There is a mighty difficulty in this case upon persons that dwell in human flesh, and that have faculties about them which do contemper and suit them to this sensible world in which they live. They have not only the difficulty upon them, that, while they enjoy such things they must enjoy them under a restraint; (as you heard before;) but whensoever they are called for, they must part with them without regret; willingly part with, and forego all. They cannot enjoy them, but under restraint; and they must part with them, and that without regret, if they be called for. As it is not more the commendation than it was the duty of those of whom the apostle speaks: "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," Heb. x. 34. And why did they so? They did it in the power of this same Christian hope, as knowing they had in heaven "a better and more enduring substance." It was the hope of that which made them willingly part with, and forego, all that they had and enjoyed here.

And this is the tenor of the Christian law that lies upon them, as you have it from the mouth of our blessed Lord himself: "If any man doth not forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple;" (Luke xiv. 33.) he cannot be a Christian, unless (*suppositis supponendis*) supposing such things as may be supposed, he doth forsake all, when the particular juncture happens; he doth now discover that he hath not the root of the matter in him, if he be not content to forsake all for my sake. But it is a Christian hope that enables him to do so; because that hope possesseth him with a persuasion that he shall gain by it more than all he loseth. "We have forsaken all and followed thee," say the disciples unto Christ; and you shall be no losers, saith he to them. Take but my word, and you will have ground enough for that hope, that it shall not turn to your final loss. None that forsake houses, or lands, or father, or mother, or brother, or sister, for my sake, and for the Gospel, but shall have in this world a hundred-fold, and hereafter eternal life. And it is the hope of this that makes a Christian willing to say, Then I can be content to let all go; aye, even let all go; he hath not deceived me that hath told me, and he will never deceive me that hath told me, that I shall not be a final loser by it at length. And,

Difficulty 4. There is this further difficulty in it, that he must, in some cases, not only lose all that he enjoys, but he must suffer all that it can be in the power of men to inflict, as to positive miseries and evils, that are of the greatest pungency unto the flesh and the sense that we carry about with us. All must be willingly undergone that is evil to our flesh, as all must be forgone that is good and grateful to it. And what shall enable any to do so, but the power of this hope?

How full is the Scripture and history of these instances! As full as it is of instances of the continual persecutions of Christians and Christianity itself, from age to age, ever since there came to be any such thing obtaining in the world. And it is proportionably full of instances of the power of this hope, carrying them whose hearts it did animate, through whatsoever difficulties they had to encounter in this case. That "cloud of witnesses," (which the apostle sets before our eyes in that 11th chapter of the Hebrews, and that we referred to but now,) so he calls those many witnesses, a cloud, a mighty cloud of such witnesses, all testifying to this one thing, to wit, to the power of that faith, and consequently to that hope, by which these mentioned were carried through such sufferings, calumnies, as there you read of: "They were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they were sawn asunder, they wandered up and down in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;" men "of whom the world was not worthy." And amidst all these things they despised deliverance. And why? Because they hoped for "a better resurrection." It was that faith which carried them through all, which is described at the first verse, to be "the substance of the things not seen, and the evidence of the things hoped for," Heb. xi. 1. The great things we hope for are made substantial to us; we have that clear and substantiating representation of them before our eyes.

And therefore, how many thousand deaths can we go through by the power of this hope;—that hope itself being upheld and maintained all along by an immediate Divine power!

And therefore is it that we read of such joy, and triumph, and exultation, in the midst of all these sufferings, which it was possible for human wit to invent, and human power to execute. It was not yet more than what they have been enabled to bear, and bear with a great deal of triumph many times; so as that it appeared that they had all under their feet; they could trample upon dangers and deaths, and were superior to them; they could not fasten upon them, they could take no hold of their spirits. If one should lead you through the sufferings of Christians in the ten persecutions by pagans; their sufferings afterward by the Arians, who were not less bloody and cruel than the former; their sufferings more lately by the papists, which after followed, from age to age, for twelve hundred years together; sufferings in this kind in this land, and sufferings in several adjoining countries. How numerous instances have we of the power of this hope in carrying the poor sufferers through, so as that not only have they not been removed from their Christian profession by all that they have suffered and endured; but not from their alacrity and cheerfulness of spirit: yea, that hath not only continued, but increased, and grown higher, more and more vigorous and glorious in them, by how much the more the approaches of trouble and danger were nearer. The speeches that have been uttered by many of them, even in the midst of their sufferings, have shown a triumphant glorying joy in their hearts, which is the continual issue of this hope: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" and thereupon "we glory in tribulation," Rom. v. 3, 4. They gloried in tribulation, because they did rejoice in hope of the divine glory.

And therefore have they been enabled to brow-beat their enemies, their tormentors, the executioners of all those tragical things upon them which they suffered; as when one should be able to tell the tyrant, after he had received so many wounds in his body, I thank thee, (oh tyrant,) that thou hast made me so many mouths wherewith to preach Christ; for I take every wound thou hast given me to be a new mouth wherewith to utter the divine praises, and wherewith to preach and magnify my Redeemer. With multitudes of instances that one might give of the like kind; which show that the hope that lived in their souls, whilst they were even dying, did not only keep them from denying Christ,—did not only maintain religion, and keep that alive in them; but made it triumph in a high degree of liveliness, vigour, and joy, that showed itself more exalted amidst those exercises, than when there were no trials, no danger in view. And again,

Difficulty 5. The many temptations and buffetings in their spirits, which Christians do more ordinarily experience in their course through the world. Nothing could carry through the vexation of this, (which cometh nearer, a great deal nearer, than what men can do when they only torture the outward man,) but only this hope; "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Though we be vexed with his suggestions, and very vexatious ones sometimes they are, when blasphemous thoughts are injected and cast in; there is an endeavour to fence against them, but they cannot keep them off; the tempter indeed cannot make the soul close or comply with the design of his temptations, but he doth vex by tempting; and that temptation cannot but be vexing, when the soul is solicited to think all the evil thoughts that the wicked one can be author or parent of to him, concerning God, and Christ, and religion, and many false ones concerning himself. All the continual vexing temptations that the soul is followed with from day to day, it is only the hope of final victory that carries it through. I hope it will not be so always; I hope God will give me a complete victory at last; he will bruise Satan under my feet ere long. And,

Difficulty 6. The complication of bodily and spiritual distempers together, so incident even to the generality of Christians; a great deal of lassitude and dulness upon the outward man; the prevalence of melancholy fumes and vapours, which fall in with a dark mind and dead heart; and for those continual outcries "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Rom. vii. 24. It is only deliverance in hope that carries through all this difficulty; "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 57. I have conquest and victory in Christ, that hath loved me; I am many times in myself overcome, but in him many times I do overcome, and shall finally overcome. And,

Difficulty 7. Divine desertions; when all these happen to meet together upon a poor creature, and God is withdrawn over and besides,—what a difficulty is here! The withdrawing of such a presence as even that wicked Saul was capable of, how distressing was it to him when he was sensible of it! There was a presence of God, whereof he had experience; but far beneath the excellency and delectableness of that gracious divine presence that he affords to his own, those that are peculiar to him; yet when Saul had lost that more exterior divine presence, saith he to Samuel, (when he had procured him to be raised from the dead, as that text doth please to express,) "I am greatly distressed; the Philistines make war upon me, and God is departed from me," 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

And it is so with a poor Christian; many times men are let loose upon him; the devil is let loose upon him; there is a great deal of distemperature and deadness within; and at the same time God is gone and withdrawn from him; in his sense and apprehension gone; to appearance gone. And in that case, as to actual comfort, *idem est esse et apparere; idem non esse, et non apparere;* to seem and to be, as to comfort in such a case. Here is nothing to bear up now but hope. I hope all this darkness will be over; all these clouds will vanish and flee away; "I will hope in God, that I shall yet praise him; for he is the health of my countenance, and my God;—why art thou cast down, O my soul? Trust in God, for I shall yet praise him," (Psalm xlii. and xliii.) I shall yet see a morning after so black and tempestuous a night. And,

Difficulty 8. The wearisomeness of duty and exercises of religion, in the midst of all this, is yet a further difficulty to a poor awakened soul. That is, he finds this to be the state of his case, that, in all the mentioned respects, let it be as ill with him as it can be supposed, yet he must not turn aside from following the Lord. I am in the way wherein I must persist; I must pray still, and hear still, and approach his table still. To go on in such a course of duty as this, when the mind is dark, and the heart is dead, and there is a great weight and pressure lying upon the soul, and God is withdrawn, and I come to one duty after another, and one ordinance after another, and get nothing; this is hard and heavy work; still to be (as the case is represented with the disciples) fishing all the night, and nothing taken. Now it is nothing but hope that can support and bear up in this case; this is the way of the Lord in which I am, and this way I hope will have a good end. Though I walk heavily, and the chariot wheels seem to be taken off; though my soul is not the chariot of a willing people, as sometimes it hath been; yet I must hold on my course; I must persist in it. There is that in him all this while, that will not let him desist, will not let him give over; no, by no means; he hath that sense of duty, that conscience towards God, that light concerning the equity and reasonableness of the thing, that keeps him to it. God must have his homage, however it is with me, whether it be better or worse; I must not defraud God; I must do such and such acts, as acts of duty and obedience to the Lord of my life and being, whatever becomes of me. He hath a secret hope, that all will issue well; and therefore holds on in his course. Fear will not let him go back; and hope draws him forward; for we are not to suppose that the asserting the necessity of the one of these is a diminution of, or detraction from, the necessary influence of the other. We need all God's means and methods to help and urge us on in our way and course. And I might add to all this,

Difficulty 9. The continual view of prevailing wickedness; a most afflicting and discouraging thing! When a Christian's way towards the end God hath set in view before him lies in a world overrun with wickedness, and wherein they that curse God are secure; he can turn his eye no way but he sees a world full of atheism, full of in-

fidelity, full of contempt of God, and full of rebellion against him. I hope (saith he) truth, and righteousness, and religion, and the love and fear of God, will triumph over all this at last. And because he so hopes, he persists and goes on in his well-chosen way. And in the last place, which I will close with,

Difficulty 10. The slow progress of the Christian interest, and the diffusion of the knowledge of Christ in the world; a most afflictive discouraging thing to all that are lovers of "our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Indeed, it is that which would have a more particular aspect upon the condition of the faithful ministers of the Gospel to see that the most part of their labours is labour in vain.

And you know how far the temptation as to this hath prevailed; I said, I will speak no more in his name, (saith the prophet,) "but thy word was as fire in my bones," (Jer. xx. 9.) that was not to be restrained. It is a very uncomfortable thing to labour in this kind, with the souls of men, which we apply ourselves to as reasonable, as intelligent, as capable of understanding us, and understanding the value of souls, and the differences of time and eternity, of present and everlasting things; to deal with such upon agreed principles between them and us; so as that they say, whatsoever we speak to them in the name of the Lord, it is all true. They grant as much as we would have them grant, and acknowledge whatsoever, as to every thing we propound to them, especially in the greatest and most important things, which are also things of the greatest evidence and clearness, so as to force an acknowledgment; and so as that, when we deal with men about these things, (as you heard from that scripture lately,) we have nothing to do but to commend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God. We appeal to you, whether these things be not true that we say to you, in the name of the Lord, yea or no. And they are generally acknowledged to be so. It is acknowledged that there is a world to come; that there is a state of retribution; that there is a judgment day, when men are to receive "the things done in the body, whether they be good or evil;" and wherein only a spiritual holy life, begun here in this world, will end in eternal life; and prevailing wickedness, continued in, will end in eternal death.

These things we represent and lay before men in the name of the Lord, and they say it is all true. And yet they are the same men, *Non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris;* though we have convinced men, we have not conquered them; we have persuaded, and all signifies nothing; and it is because they have no hope. It is an observable expression, that, in the 18th of Jeremiah, (I have formerly told you of another like it, chap. ii. 25. and it is worth our notice,) "Return ye, now, every one from his evil ways, and make your ways and your doings good," Jer. xviii. 11, 12. So God bespeaks them by the prophet, or the prophet bespeaks them in the name of God: "But they said there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." Because there is no hope; we have no hope that ever we shall be able to alter our course, or that ever we shall be able to do good of it in an attempt of reformation; and therefore, we will go on as we have done.

Truly then, this is the sense and posture of them that we have to deal with in the name of the Lord; they will not turn, because there is no hope; the case would be the same with us now, who so deal with men; that is, we should give over treating with them if we had no hope; we would speak to them no more in that name, nor open a Bible in our solemn assemblies, if we had no hope; but, because we have this hope, we use great freedom of speech, we hope we shall prevail at length; and we hope, however, that our blessed Lord Jesus shall have a glorious body out of this world before he hath done; a glorious community, that shall be associated to "the general assembly and church of the first-born, written in heaven; the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect;" whether men we speak to now in his name do hear or forbear, he shall have a glorious assembly above. "He will be glorified in all them that believe," because the Gospel testimony was received. That will be a triumphant day; and our hope of bearing a share and part in the triumphs of that day carries us through; and we go on, notwithstanding this great difficulty; a principal difficulty it is to us. But it is a common difficulty to "all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" according as it is the common desire to have the Christian religion, in the power, life, and vigour of it, spread; and that more souls may be proselyted and brought in: all that love Christ, and all that love the souls of men, cannot but have this desire; and accordingly the difficulty and trouble is great that they have continually to conflict with, that so little is done in this case, and that they see so little done in their day. But the hope of a glorious issue must carry you through all these difficulties. This will have a glorious end at last.

SERMON XXI.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope

WE have insisted largely in opening to you the great important truth contained in these words; and now, our yet remaining business is to make some use of it, which will be,

Use 1. In divers instructive inferences that this truth will afford us. As,

Inference 1. If we are saved by hope, then we are lost by despair; no inference can be more plain.

If the souls of men are to be saved by hope, they are liable to be lost by despair. And it hath been my great design, from this and some other texts, to do what in me should lie to keep you from that horrid gulf. But I must in faithfulness tell you, that there is, as to this, most danger where there is least apprehension or suspicion of it. There is a raging despair, and there is a silent dead despair. This latter is the fullest of danger, according as it is less obvious unto observation, and lies as a mortal disease in wrapping the hearts of them who suspect nothing less than that they should be despairing creatures. But when we are told that we are saved by hope, it cannot be understood by any hope whatsoever; for there is a hope that will undo, that will destroy; and so you may, ere long, have opportunity to know too, that there is a despair which is as necessary, as there is a hope that is mortal and destructive; but there is with all a deadly despair, that kills and destroys when it is never felt.

When we say we are saved by hope, it must be meant by the truly Christian hope; that hope that is vital, lively; the *terminus productus* in regeneration: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Pet. i. 3. We are begotten to a lively hope, a hope that lives. The want of this hope is the despair I mean; and it would not be despair in every subject; but in such a subject as is capable of that hope, and where that hope ought to be, it is despair. As the want of life is death in a man, but not in a stone; when there is not a lively hope terminating upon God, and upon a blessed eternity, and an unseen glory; when there is not such a hope, where that hope hath not its proper place, there lies and lurks this deadly despair. A vacancy of hope towards God and the blessedness of the other state, where it ought to be, and which indeed doth carry much of the essence in it (as we shall have further occasion to note) of the new creature; and it is the very perfection of human nature itself; to wit, to have a soul directed towards God by the power of a vital hope, continually expecting felicity and blessedness from him; I say, the vacancy of it is despair. But that perfection of our nature, regeneration brings in and supplies. "We are begotten again to a lively hope;" as the degeneration, deformity, and depravedness of human nature expels and keeps it out. But it so much belongs to a man as a man, that, as Philo Judæus (who speaks but as such a one) doth fitly enough say, Hope in God is so

* Preached July 19th, 1691.

much of human nature, that he is unworthy to be called a man that is destitute of it. Now that soul is destitute of it that hath no commerce with God, that hath nothing to do with him day by day. Where there is no hope, there is despair God-ward, "without God, and without hope," Eph. ii. 12. You (whoever it be) that transact all your affairs without God, have nothing to do with God from morning to night, you have no hope; none of this vital hope, this living hope, by which we are to be saved. Do you hope in God, when you have nothing to do with him, when you mind him not, when no thought of him comes into your heart?

I pray, let none so deceive themselves as to think that there is no such thing as despair when they feel not the flames of hell in their souls; for, sure a lethargy may be as mortal as a burning fever; when there is such a stupidity upon the soul, such a mindlessness of God, that there is in reference to him neither fear nor hope. And as our present state is, even in reference to the business of salvation, there cannot be hope but there must be fear too; there is no such hope as to exclude fear in the present state, nor such fear as to exclude hope. But here is the dismal state of the case, as to the most, that they have neither hope nor fear in reference to the affairs of their souls, and their everlasting concerns; wherever they are, they have no thoughts of such matters; there is neither hope nor fear. And where, then, is that which should save you? If we are indeed to be saved by hope, we are lost by the vacancy of it, and when there is no such thing as fear also. But doth such a supine neglectfulness and oscitancy, with reference to the concerns of our souls and our everlasting state, agree with the common notion of us all; that this present state is but a state of probation and preparation, in reference to a final and eternal state? Is it so indeed? And have we in reference to that final state, neither hope nor fear? What is like to be the issue of this? But,

Inference 2. We again infer, that the happiness of a Christian is future; for it is the object of hope,—that hope which is to have a continual influence upon his salvation. Now the object of hope is somewhat future and unseen; somewhat that lies out of sight as yet. "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it;" as the following words of the text show us. Understand and consider aright then, the state of one that is a Christian indeed. He is one that hath his best and supreme good lying in futurity, and out of sight. He lives by that faith "which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. He is one that hath not his good things here, Luke xvi. 25. This is a true account of his state; his portion is not in this life, Psal. xvi. 1. His estate lies in reversion; it is somewhat expected, somewhat looked for; he takes hold of it by that hope which is cast, "as an anchor of the soul, within the veil; (Heb. vi. 19, 20.) whither Jesus, the forerunner, for us entered;" and so his title is sure, for there is such a one gone before, who, having procured, is thereupon gone to take possession of his inheritance for him.

Then, if you are to make an estimate or judgment of the condition of a Christian, a saint, a child of God, do not judge of it by present appearance, and the external state of his present case, while he is here in this world; so it may be an appearance, not only mean, but frightful;—you may behold him not only a despised one, but a hated one, persecuted, trodden under foot by an injurious, angry world;—angry for this, that he seems not to have his satisfaction in the same things that they have, but to be aiming at somewhat else above and beyond them. This is displeasing; this is ungrateful. The world doth not understand such a sort of men; "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!—therefore the world knoweth us not, (1 John iii. 1.) because it knew him not." It knows nothing at all of this race, neither father, nor children. The world knows nothing of them; it cannot tell how to form an idea, a distinct notion, of this sort of men, that are so descended, and of such a parentage. They are men of another genius, another spirit, another kind of design. The tendency of their course is another way, and they know not what to make of it; "therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not;" and because it doth not know, it hates. And all the effects of hatred many times appear mighty conspicuous towards that sort of men; and would do more, it is likely, if they did appear more like themselves, and did more plainly avow their unrelatedness to this world, and their relation to and expectations from an upper world, a higher world. But as it is, as the divine nature that is in them doth more or less speak forth, and show itself, so it stirs the indignation of a deserted forsaken world against them, in whom that nature is and doth appear. And then, by this means, they come to be counted the scum and offscouring of all things.

Therefore their condition is not to be judged of by such measures as these; do not judge of the *bonum*, the *optabile*, what is good, and what is desirable in the state of a sincere living Christian, by these present appearances, that lie under common view, as now he is a mean, despised, hated thing, but consider him in that state which his hopes do aim at and tend to, and then you will behold him arrayed with the garments of salvation; for it is the hope of salvation that aids him, animates him, and carries him through his course, and which finally will actually save him. Behold him as he is crowned with a diadem of glory, and associated with that blessed community of saved ones, as one that comes to bear his part in adorning the triumphs of his great and glorious Lord and Redeemer, in that day when he shall appear to be "admired in his saints, and to be glorified in all them that believe;" because the Gospel testimony was received among them in the proper day and season thereof. And judge now what it is to be a Christian; take your measures of the state of a Christian by what he hopes for; not by what he is, but what he reasonably and groundedly hopes to be. And again,

Inference 3. The futurities of a Christian are far more considerable than all the present enjoyments of this world. "We are saved by hope;" and, for this world, it is well if we can be saved from it; but we are never to expect being saved by it; but by the hope of these great futurities we are saved. Then, certainly, a Christian's futurities are far more considerable, and far more eligible, than all present worldly enjoyments whatsoever. And you may judge so by this, that such a one is inspired from heaven itself with such a hope as this, that makes him neglect all this earth, and breathe and tend continually upwards. That is a true judgment which proceeds from the directions and operations of the Divine Spirit. He that hath made them hope hath made them thus judge, (for they do not hope irrationally or brutishly,) that the enjoyments of this world are not comparable to the expectations of believers in reference to the other world. You may trust to that judgment which is made in the virtue and by the special direction of his Spirit, who is the God of hope: "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing," as the apostle's expression is, Rom. xv. 13.

Therefore, if you would make a judgment in this case, which is the most desirable thing, a large, full, and opulent portion here in this world, or "an inheritance with the saints in light," guide your judgment, (if you cannot judge by an immediate light of your own,) by theirs, who may best be presumed to have light in this matter; to wit, that have this divine principle put into them by God himself, which looks with neglect upon all present things, and waving and overlooking them, turns away from them, and tends its eye and course forwards towards an unseen glory and felicity elsewhere. We do commonly take that as likely to be true, which the wisest and most judicious commonly agree in. Now this is the agreed sense of all the children of God in all times and ages; and thereupon they are carried, according to judgment and choice, to waive a present portion and felicity in this world, and seek it elsewhere; we may certainly conclude, that the heavenly felicity, which is hoped for by this sort of men, is every way more considerable, eligible, and desirable, than the best wordly portion that can be had here on earth. But it is a great matter when we assent to this, (which we shall do notionally, as soon as we hear it notionally,) to have also the living sense thereof wrought into our souls, so as to be able to say, I not only know it to be so, but I feel it to be so. But again, further,

Inference 4. We may infer that hope is the life of all true and serious religion. If there be any such thing as living Christianity among us, hope is the life of it. You will easily apprehend that religion is the way to felicity, the means to the blessed end. But what kind of religion must it be? Not dead religion, but living; and there can be no living religion but what is animated by hope, and by the hope of that very end, to which it is itself in a tendency. The religion of the present state is nothing else but inchoate felicity; it is heaven begun; it is a coming to God, and tending towards him. It is one and the same principle by which any thing doth move and rest. The same nature which is the principle of motion and of rest. If religion be a principle of motion to carry us unto God, it will be a principle of rest, to give us the actual repose and satisfaction and solace of soul, that being in him consists in. But this must be living religion, and not dead. And there can be no life in it, but as it is continually inspired by hope.

Religion being an aiming at God, a tendency towards God, to wit, the religion of the way; the religion of the present state; it must continually be influenced by such an apprehension as this, that he is willing to be a "rewarder of them that diligently seek him," "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 6. And it is this faith that is the immediate foundation of hope. I hope I shall find him the rewarder of my soul. I hope my labour in the Lord will not be in vain. This is that that doth inspirit religion, and make it a living thing. There is indeed a religion in the world that hath no life in it, that lies all in empty show, and form, and external appearance. But, if there be life in it, hope is the life of it. I hope I shall reach a blessed end at last in this way. The business of religion is to seek God; in seeking him I hope that I shall find him; I find life, and satisfaction, and felicity, and eternal blessedness in him. This hope is the soul of religion, and the very life of it.

And you ought to consider it so; that accordingly, the several parts of your religion may be animated and influenced by it. Those are dull duties, that are not considered as your way to your end. Every such duty as we are now engaged in at this time should be considered thus: this is part of my way to heaven, part of my way to a blessed eternity; we are now met here with an expectation and hope, that we shall, ere long, be taken up to the "general assembly and church of the first-born; to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect." Heb. xii. 23. This would make the duties and ordinances of every Lord's day lively things with us, when we are all aiming to take hold, in every such duty, of "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." But if we come together here only to see one another's faces, or to hear the sound of a few empty words, without knowing whither they tend, without minding to what end they serve, or what they aim at, or because we know not how else to spend so many hours of a day that is not allowed for our common labour; we shall make but a flat thing of our religion. But if our religion be a living thing, hope is the end of it,—I hope my way will end in eternal felicity at length; this is my way to God and glory, and to a blessed eternity. And,

Inference 5. You may further learn that all serious religion doth involve and carry in it a design for salvation and eternal blessedness: for we are saved by the hope of this, and there can be no hope of it without the design of it; what we hope for we design for, otherwise our hope is altogether a useless, inactive thing in us. We are only saved by hope, as by hope we are prompted to design salvation, and are made lively and vigorous in the prosecution of that design; which way else should hope save us, but as it engageth to lay a design for salvation, and as it enables us with life and vigour to prosecute that design, as a compassable thing, as a thing that may be brought about, and, by God's gracious vouchsafement, will and shall?

And it is therefore deeply to be considered, that our hope of being saved, and our design for salvation, must measure one another; he that drives no such design through the whole of his abode in this world, he must be looked upon as one of those (of whom I have told you before) that hath no hope in him; no living hope; was never begotten to a lively hope. If he have a living hope in him of a final felicity in God, that will continually prompt him to design, and to prosecute his design with strength and vigour, for a blessed and a glorious eternity. And I pray let us make our reflection seriously upon this, as in the sight and presence of God. Do we carry it from day to day as those that are striving a design for salvation and eternal glory? as those that are going to heaven? as candidates of eternal heavenly felicity? Do we live like such? Then should we be every day on the wing, reaching forth (as it is the nature of hope to do) with fervent, raised aspirings towards the heavenly state. We that have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, (as it is spoken in the immediate foregoing verse in this context,) waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body; for we are saved by hope, so the words are connected. We are saved by the hope of that very state, wherein we are to be owned openly of God, as his children; which is here called the adoption.

There was among the Romans a double adoption; there was a private adoption; that is, the foundations were laid by some private act. But afterwards it came to be declared *in foro*, and to be enrolled, that such a one did adopt such a one to be his son. And it is in reference to this latter sort of adoption, or the complement and solemnization of it, that we are said to wait for the adoption; that is, the children of God, they that were adopted before fundamentally; they yet wait for the solemnization of that adoption, when the manifestation shall be of the sons of God, when it shall be declared before angels and men, as it will, in the judgment of the great day, These I take for my sons and adopted ones; and it is by the hope of this we are saved, for we are saved by hope, as immediately there followeth. And I say, that this hope can no otherwise save them, than as it doth continually influence a design of that salvation. But if our great business here in this world be from day to day nothing else but to feed upon the dust of the earth, and to please and indulge self and the flesh; if this be the design we are daily striving, we have none of this hope that saves souls; where that hope is, a correspondent design cannot but be. The religion of such involves and carries in it a continual design for the blessedness of the heavenly state; therefore nothing can be more incongruous and absurd, than to keep up a show and face of religion, while yet the hearts of men, if they will but reflect, are conscious to themselves of no such design: they are not aiming at God, or at blessedness in God; the possessing of a future felicity and glory in him, and with him. They cannot justly and truly pretend to such a thing. Then (I say) is a course of religion the greatest absurdity in the world; to do in a continued course those actions that have only reference unto such an end, and never to refer to that end. To be religious without design, to wit, the proper design of religion, (which is felicity,) nothing can be more absurd.

Objection. But it may be said, how is it possible that a man should be religious without design? A man doth not act in religion, but it must be done voluntarily; and if it be done voluntarily, it must be done for an end, so there can be no such thing (you will say) as keeping up a course of religion without a design.

Answer. Very true, indeed, there could be no such thing as keeping up a course of religion without a design; but that is not the matter I speak of, a design in general. A man cannot do a series of merely human actions without some design or other, or simply without any design; but when the actions that make up a course of religion are done, we cut this design for the proper end of religion. Here lies the absurdity and incongruity that I now state, to tear a series and course of actions from their proper end, and not refer them to that end, this is most irrational trifling. As if, when all the other actions of a man's life are done for a certain determinate end only in the great business of religion, he plays the fool, he doth the thing, but never minds the end; keeps such days as these; comes to church; attends upon the public solemnities of God's worship; but never thinks of heaven, never minds eternal glory, as the thing in this way to be designed for. And so his religion, and the duties of it, bear no proportion to his end, to that end that they were made for. There is a two-fold design driven by religion, or by carrying on a

course of religion, by very different sorts of men. That is, a design for this world, and a design for the world to come: some are religious only with a design for this world; to wit, that I may carry it fair with men in this world, or with that sort of men which I think fittest, and have some inducements which lead me to associate with, to apply myself to them, and to have their good opinion, and have a good reputation among them; I am willing, therefore, to be as they are, and to do as they do; here is a design for this world driven in religion, and the actions and duties of it; not (it may be) to gain; but there may be many worldly designs, besides that of gain; worldly repute and credit among those whose opinion I most esteem, and put a value upon, and to whom, therefore, in such a way, I think to approve and recommend myself.

But there is also a design driven in religion for the world to come. And this is the true and proper design of religion. And where the former only is designed, we can hardly ever comprehend in our thoughts a more horrid frightful case; when a man is doing the great sacred acts of religion, without a design for their proper end, and in mere subserviency to some mean and inferior design, by how much the less that is, or the lower the design is, or by how much the less is to be got by it, so much is religion the lower debased; being thereby put into a subverviency to that which, it may be, shall be worth nothing to men; that I shall never gain by one way or other: and yet, I choose to do acts of religion; or to do these, and not take other acts thereof; or, to do these I do in this or that form; and do all in accommodation to some secular purpose and design: but the eternal purposes of religion are forgotten, neglected, and never thought of by me. This is to prostitute the most sacred, venerable thing imaginable, (religion,) to the meanest and most despicable end.

How is this to be answered for, or wherein can we possibly conceive a more horrid sort of sacrilege than this? The acts of religion have a sacredness in them; but I aliene them from their proper end. This I do not, in order to the serving of God; not in order to the saving of my soul; or not in reference to an eternal state; but I do it to please my own present humour, or my friend's humour. Is this that indeed which we will resolve our religion into? Such trifling with religion is that which will be dearly accounted for at the last day. To do that which we ought to do for pleasing and glorifying of God, and saving our souls in the day of the Lord Jesus, we cannot tell why, or for what reason, will come to a fearful reckoning at last. We ought to bethink ourselves at all such times, when we are thus assembled; What am I here to-day for? Why did I come to this place this morning? Why did I take upon me to make one, and bear a part in a Christian religious assembly? Did I do it as one that hoped for salvation, and expected eternal life in this way? Was it that I might draw so much nearer to God, and be so much the more acquainted with him, and fitted for that state which I profess to hope for? But again,

Inference 6. We may further learn, that there is a very great sagacity belonging to the new creature, and the regenerate state; we are saved by hope; this imports the new creature, those that are born of God in order to eternal life, to be a very sagacious sort of creatures. The new creature is a very foreseeing creature; it is in this, eminently distinguished from other creatures, even of the same rank and order in God's creation; to wit, merely human creatures: whereas others look merely, or only, to the present, here is a strange foresight in this sort of creature that is born of God, by which it eyeth and looketh towards salvation, and eternal blessedness. As soon as it is born, "It is begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance reserved in heaven for it," 1 Pet. i. 3. The new creature hath a hope belonging to its essence; as soon as it begins to be, and breathe, it begins to hope. It is born to the hope of immortality and eternal life.

We ought to consider this, and a great judgment is to be made of our own state, by what we find instilled into ourselves of that spiritual sagacity and foresight. There are many that are apt to be foreseeing (and value themselves greatly upon it) of temporary events, the probability of such and such events, and love to discourse and reason thereupon; as politicians, or as prophets, they can value themselves greatly upon such foresight; but here is the true foresight that sees into eternity.

That is the best, and clearest, and strongest sight that can see furthest; that overlooks (it may be) the concernments of to-morrow, of this year and the next, within the bounds and compass of time; yea, looks beyond all time, penetrates into eternity, beholds the judgment-seat, the Judge sat, the books opened, the dead raised, and men disposed severally to their eternal states. The new creature, that divine birth, which fetcheth its original immediately from God, this is its sagacity; with such sagacity and foresight it is endowed. "We are saved by hope," we have a hope by which we expect to be saved, which penetrates into the unseen futurities of an everlasting state. And,

Inference 7. We may hereupon conclude too, That there is a certain generosity, a nobleness, a greatness of mind, that doth belong unto a regenerate person. The new creature, one that is born of God, by which he is borne up above all this world, tramples upon it, scorns its smiles, smiles at its frowns, and scorns, despiseth its threats and terrors, looks still beyond it and above it. What is all this world to me? A shadow, a despicable vanity! My great concernments lie above in a superior world, in a remoter world. This is generous and great. Oh! saith one that is born of God, I cannot live at the common rate, I cannot live upon this country fare, I must fetch in all the provisions I live by, from day to day, from heaven; eat heavenly food, and drink heavenly drink, such meat and such drink as the world affords not; for such a prepossession, and such a pre-occupation, there is by hope of the felicity of heaven, and of the heavenly state. They do support this frail mortal life as others do; but they have another life that is to be supported in another way, and by other means; and in reference to which they find an unsuitableness in all things under the sun, as we should in gravel for our meat, and puddle for our drink; so that if you ask such a one, what he lives by, as to the maintenance of that nobler life that is in him, he will answer, by hope.

You may possibly (some of you) have heard and read of a great prince and general, who, upon a conquest, dispensing great largesses among his soldiers, was asked, And what, sir, do you reserve for yourself? Why, hope, saith he. I, for my part, live upon hope. I give away all that I have now got, and live upon the hope of more. This is the generosity and nobleness of mind that is in-wrought into a regenerate person. When he becomes so, he despiseth all things under the sun as a portion, as a final terminative good, and lives upon hope. And this we must come to, if ever we come to know what it is to be Christians. It is too little understood (I am afraid to this day) what it is to be a Christian, though we have long borne that name. Are not we told, they are a sort of people called out of the world? "They are not of this world," (saith our blessed Lord, in that concluding solemn prayer of his, when he was going out of the world,) "even as I am not of this world," John xvii. 16. Oh, what a horrid thing would it be to contradict our blessed Lord, in the sense of our own hearts! He saith, "they are not of this world;" but here is one answering, Aye, Lord, but I am of this world; one with this world, united to it: I savour the things of the world, as the men of the world do; I choose with them, and enjoy with them: a fearful thing from the sense of our hearts, to contradict our blessed Lord! to have him say, "They that are mine are not of this world, as I am not of this world;" and we be forced to say, concerning ourselves, Yes, but we are of this world, and related to this world more than any other, and savour the things of this world more than any other.

There are sundry other inferences more that I intend now to go through, but there is one thing for the present I would shut up with, though I do therein anticipate and prevent myself; that is only to recommend this one thing to you, as a piece of solemn counsel and serious consideration, that you will labour to get your souls possessed of this principle, and direct it towards its final object; let it reach forth even unto the very last of the object that it is to be taken up about; for this we must know, that there are intermediate objects, and there is that at length which

is most finally final. But hope hath its strongest and most powerful influences, as it doth reach furthest, reach into a most glorious eternity; and makes us say within ourselves, I hope to be there ere long. What a wonderful thing would it be, if we could always worship under such a hope! what mighty vigour would it infuse into our religion, to say to every one that meet together in such an assembly; We meet together in hope and expectation of having our eternal abode with that blessed society above, in the mansions of glory that are prepared already in our Father's house! To have this hope live in us, what life would it not transfuse through all our duties, and through the whole course of our religion!

And what a pleasant relish would it give to all our present mercies, such as we have greater occasion more solemnly to bless God for; when we have matter of praise laid before us, and offered to us, as we have at this day! We have heard of the great success God hath blessed and crowned them with, who have been fighting his battles of late, especially in a neighbouring kingdom. It is a great thing to say, Blessed be God that hath done so much, and I hope will do more, and will enable them to carry on the work further; and I hope beyond all that, that I shall be one of the saved community at last. What spirit and life would that add to our prayer and praise!

And on the other side, what a damp and diminution would it be to all our matter of praise, and to the praisefulness of our spirits, to say, I have heard, indeed, that things have gone pretty well of late in Savoy, in Germany, and greatly well in Ireland; but all this while I have no hope of being saved; I have no hope of things going well with me hereafter; things may go well here, for aught I know, with them to whom I wish well; but I have no hope that things will go well with me for ever, or in an everlasting state. What a damp is this to the great praisefulness of a man's spirit, and what a diminution to the present matter of his praise! It is an insignificant thing for me to put in my rejoicing with their joy, who are pleased with any such good successes as these; and in the mean time to be forced to say, Alas! there is a dreadful doom hanging over me, and over my soul; I have nothing in me that looks like a principle of the divine life; and yet I am sure that life must be now begun in me, that must be connected with eternal life. A present spiritual death hath no connexion with eternal life, it must be a spiritual life, of which this hope (as you have heard) is so great a principle, that shall end in life eternal.

SERMON XXII.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I HAVE made some progress in the use, and some instructive inferences I have recommended to you; and more I did intend to add, but I shall now waive them, intending to make all the haste I can to go through what I most principally intended on this subject.

And, that which remains is to direct to the serious and most earnest (in that way which may be the most probable) endeavour of getting this noble principle implanted, cultivated, and improved, amongst us towards this its high and glorious end, our own salvation. And, because (as hath been largely shown you) this great principle (Hope) contributes thereunto, both by the influence that it hath in order to the conversion of the unconverted, and by the influence that it hath upon the perseverance of the converted; therefore the tenor of my discourse herein must be suitable hereunto, and must respect both these sorts of persons; but so as that I do hope each may find their own concern in each part of the following discourse, while yet the several parts may more principally and directly respect the one sort or the other. And,

Direction 1. The direction I shall give you, (and which will certainly concern us all,) is, that we may all more seriously and earnestly mind the great business of our own salvation, and more deeply concern ourselves about it. I am sure such hope can never signify any thing with them, in order to salvation, who are not concerned about their salvation, that mind no such matter. I am very little willing to be much in repetition of any thing that hath been said to you formerly; but, if I would repeat any thing, I can do nothing that is more fit to be reconsidered, than what I told you upon the first inference; that, if hope have such a tendency to our salvation, despair must have a like tendency to our destruction. If souls are to be saved by hope, they are in greatest danger to be lost by despair. I say, what I told you upon that head, to wit, that there are two sorts of despair; a silent, calm, stupid despair, and a strong, raging despair.

There are a great many that are in despair about their salvation, who never think they are, and in whom it makes no noise; to wit, that are without any real vivid hope concerning their salvation; and the vacancy of hope, right hope, in a subject to which it belongs, is to be called by the name of its contrary, despair. According to the known and most common agreed rules of reasoning, in such matters; those souls that are dead towards God, and their own eternal concernments, have no hope in God, and are really sunk in despair, and are likely to be lost and perish by it, if mercy do not seasonably mend their case.

And, in what I am now pressing you unto, hope, to get it implanted and improved to its proper purpose; I would be loth to be mistaken; as if, in pressing to hope, I pressed to security. And indeed I would hardly think that any one that hath the understanding of a man, that will use thought, can be guilty of so gross a mistake; for sure there is the widest and broadest difference imaginable between security and hope. The hope of salvation, of eternal life, and eternal well-being! What! is there any thing in this like security? Such a hope is a positive thing, a real and great something; security is but a vacuity of fear and care about a man's own concernments; and that is a mere nothing. What? I beseech you, is there no difference between something so great, a something and nothing? Such a hope is a most lively, powerful, active principle, wheresoever it is; and mightily stirs in the soul, and makes it mightily bestir itself, in the pursuit of its end: security, as it is nothing, so it doth nothing; it puts the soul upon doing nothing, lets it still be dead, and unconverted; care for being saved who will for them, for their parts they do not. There is no likeness between these two things, security and such a hope.

But now if I do not prevail with you, as to this first direction, the throwing off security, and minding more seriously, and in good earnest, the concerns of your souls; my labour is lost, and your souls are lost; and if I gain not this first point among you, all that is said and designed is to no purpose. But can any, upon sober consideration, think that it is a likely matter that salvation is so common as the neglect of it is? Or, are men in a likely way to be saved, that so generally disregard any such thing, think of no such matter from day to day, and from year to year? Is that imagination agreeable to Scripture calls and warnings? Strive to enter in at the strait gate, that leads to life. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. What! are all such words from the mouth of God, and by his inspired servants, only sown to the wind, thrown among men into empty air?

If we would consider things reasonably, and with sober understandings, nothing would be more obvious to us than to bethink ourselves, that contraries have all their place in the same subject, not in divers: and thus in this case so it must be, so it ought to be; this being a matter of moral consideration, that wherever there ought to be hope, there ought to be fear too; the exigency of the case requiring it. And while matters do yet hang dubiously, (as they will do more or less, with all of us in this region of mortality,) we shall never be past all danger, nor all appearances of it; there will be no more perfection of assurance, than perfection of holiness. Doth the Scripture say in vain to us, that we are to be saved by hope? And doth the same Scripture, the same word of God, say to us, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling? Sure there

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is no repugnancy between these things, but a necessary agreement, a most necessary agreement.

And, as contraries do always exist only in the same subject, so in lower degrees they do always co-exist in it, exist in it together: and therefore, where there is hope, there ought to be fear, in reference and respect to the concernments of our salvation; for we are not to think, that the one of these scriptures doth exantlate the other, and make it lose its force and signify nothing; this being a word given to men in mortal flesh, this divine word that we have in this book, we must know that it concerns men, and is to be applied to them in accommodation to the state in which they are; and in reference whereunto it is written. And, therefore, the state of none is so desperate as theirs, who, in reference to the affairs of their salvation, have neither hope nor fear; as they that mind it not, have neither the one, nor the other.

And, because of the weight and mighty importance of this thing, I shall insist upon it; and press this a little, before I go further, by some considerations. As,

1. That to be unconcerned about the affairs of our salvation, is continually to stifle a most natural principle; we have no principle, no notion, that is more natural to us, than that we have something about us that cannot die, that is made for eternity, and for another state after this. I cannot now stand to prove to you the mortality of the soul; my subject doth not lead me to it: but it is that we all profess to believe, and which we pretend to believe of ourselves, unless we could disprove it and plainly evince the contrary; and, I would fain know how any man would go about to disprove that he is a creature made for another state after this. How will he prove himself to be nothing but a mortal creature? How will he prove, that let him be never so like a beast, he shall die like a beast too? How will he prove that? And that the ultimate end, which man was made for, is attainable in this earthly state? How will any man go about to prove this? If he would prove himself a beast, the evidence of things will repugn, and fly in his face. It is only not thinking that makes men adventurous in a matter of this import. Oh! how dismal a thing is it, when, instead of the hope of salvation, all that a man hath to relieve himself is, the hope of annihilation, a hope of his running into nothing; that instead of blessedness, he hath no other hope, but only of no being!

But consider (I say) that by this, here is a continual stifling of a most deeply natural principle; for there is no man that would fain abolish the thoughts of that immortal nature he hath about him; but still they will recoil upon him. This spirit that God put into man by his own inspiration, carries with it a secret consciousness of its own immortality; and there can be no disbelief hereof, or opinion of the contrary, that is not conjoined with a great *formido* opposite, a certain misgiving and fear that it will at last prove otherwise; but, in the mean time to own such a principle as that, (as among us it is generally owned,) and yet to have the habitual temper of a man's soul be directly opposite thereunto; to wit, in an unconcernment what shall and may become of him, in an everlasting state; this is the most intolerable thing that we can suppose the human nature liable to. A most unsufferable absurdity, that I should have such a fixed apprehension and sentiment about me that I know not how to get rid of, and yet the habitual frame of my mind, and the whole course of my practice, run directly contrary to it. And then,

2. As unconcernedness about our salvation doth oppose this principle in the very nature of man, (than which none is more deeply fundamental,) so it doth reproach the dignity of the human nature, as well as oppose the light of it. It reproacheth the dignity and honour of the human nature. They are continually throwing contempt upon their own nature, that live unconcernedly about their future state and eternal salvation. If we would but consider this matter seriously, who is there that would not be ashamed to have this written in his forehead, I do not care what becomes of my soul to all eternity? Who would not be ashamed to carry that character visible to every man? To proclaim himself one that thinks he is of no greater or nobler allay in the creation of God, than a brute creature? Whence is here a regret to avow and own such a principle, but only that we think it to be ignominious? If there be not these explicit thoughts, there is such a secret sense, that it would be an ignominious thing, a reproachful thing.

But how accountable is this, that a man should not be ashamed of the thing, and yet he is ashamed of the profession of it? Men are not ashamed of the thing; to wit, to be careless of, and unconcerned about, their own souls, and their eternal salvation; they go from day to day without any suitable regret within themselves for their own carelessness and negligence, and yet they would be ashamed to avow an unconcernedness to all the world. There is no rational account to be given, why men should be ashamed of the profession of such a thing, and yet not be ashamed of the thing itself. To go every day from morning to night, without any care, thought, or concern, what shall become of my soul, as to eternal salvation hereafter; never to have the soul smite them about this thing, from day to day, and from week to week; and be ashamed, to feel a loathness in their own minds, to avow infidelity, and profess mere brutality, that I am nothing but a mere brute animal; how unaccountable is this!

Indeed, the great iniquity in this matter is this: that men do not more allow themselves to study and contemplate themselves; that they do not labour to have more reverential thoughts even of the very nature of man; I mean the primitive nature of man. There is nothing indeed more despicable and hateful than corrupt and vicious nature. That precept of that noted heathen, that we reverence ourselves and our own nature, it needs inculcation. And, as to this very particular thing of hope towards God, (with which unconcernedness about our salvation and future felicity it is plain cannot consist,) there have been higher and more raised thoughts about it, and about the nature of man, in reference hereunto, with some from whom one would little expect it, than is usual among Christians themselves. I cannot but reflect again and again upon that of Philo the Jew, who tells us, that hope towards God is that which doth most properly belong to the nature of man: so that, (as he speaks,) (the *euelpist*,) he that hath this hope easiest and most familiar to him, is only to be counted a man; but the (*dyselpist*,) he that finds an aversion in him to such actings of hope towards God, is scarcely to be counted a man; hardly to be looked upon as one that is partaker of a rational nature; so high was the notion of human nature laid with some such in those days. But now, where there is nothing else but a daily stupid unconcernedness in men about the affairs of their souls, and their everlasting state, there is even among such (though they bear the name of Christians) such a contempt of themselves, and such an indignity done to the nature of man, as many that have not been Christians would have been ashamed of. And,

3. Such an unconcernedness about our salvation, it is a continual disobedience to a most natural divine law. We ought to account, that where no other law than that of our own natures is, that yet such do live properly under the obligation of a law: for I beseech you consider, do you think that God is not governor of the rest of the world, as well as he is of Christendom? And how doth he govern reasonable creatures without a law? "They that have not a written law, are a law to themselves," Rom. ii. 14, 15. And heathens tell us of a *nata* and a *scripta lex*, and where there is not a *scripta* there is a *nata*: a law that is born with us, a law written in our hearts, are expressions common to Cicero, and to the apostle Paul; and therefore light about this matter in some degree hath been common to men. There is no more deeply natural law upon men, than that of self-preservation; and if the soul of man be the man, or the chief of man, the principal thing in man, do you think it doth not lie under the obligation of a law to preserve itself, to endeavour to save itself, to keep itself, as far as it can, from being lost and miserable to eternity, since it is capable of eternity? And therefore consider,

4. That God cannot but be highly provoked, when the authority of this law, of which he hath impressed on the very soul of man and wrought into his nature, is continually violated. Consider it, for he cannot but be highly provoked with it; "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" where the apostle's discourse is about natural truth, about those dictates of

truth that lie naturally and universally in the minds of men; as the notions concerning God do, that he instanceth in, in what immediately followeth; and concerning right and wrong, even unto men; with which is contempered the obligations that lie upon every man in reference to himself; because the duty we owe to other men is measured by that which we owe to ourselves, the whole law being comprehended in love. And that comprehensive principle being thus given by our Lord himself, to wit, "We are to love the Lord our God, with all our hearts, souls, minds, and might; and to love our neighbours as ourselves:" which therefore involves, firstly, and in the highest place, this care for ourselves. And since in the common acknowledgment of all, our souls are our most principal and chief selves, a love to our souls, and care for them, must needs be one of the great principles of natural truth; for the violation whereof the wrath of God is revealed; to wit, against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold this truth in unrighteousness. To have such truths as these, always lying in my mind and soul, and continually to run counter to them, how provoking is it!

When I consider the law of nature as God's law, and that by which he governs that part of the world which hath no other law, and that the obligation thereof is perpetual and eternal, and can cease no where; to be guilty of continual violations of this, is to tear the foundations of the Divine government. And therefore it is not strange that wrath should be revealed from heaven against men, upon such an account; that they hold such truths in unrighteousness, and stifle and counteract it, through the whole of their course, from day to day. And to bring this down to our own particular cases and concernments: to wit, if a man arise in the morning, and all his care for the following day is, what shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and what shall I put on, and how shall I make a gainful bargain for this world, to advance my estate, and the like? and no proportionable care or concernment is taken for his soul, or its salvation, all the day. This (I say) is to live in a continual violation of one of the most deeply fundamental laws of his own nature, for which the wrath of God is provoked and revealed against men, for such ungodliness. There doth not need a Gospel to bring such men under a doom, but it doth bring them under a heavier doom being superadded. That Gospel wherein life and immortality are brought to light, to wit, into a closer and brighter light; that is, whereas the light of the pagan Gentile world is but a twilight, a dubious light, in comparison of that which we have in the Gospel, concerning the future eternal states of men; therefore this super-addition must heighten men's doom. And then again,

5. This is to be considered too, That in such an unconcernedness about our salvation, we do not only offend against the authority of the Divine law; but against the goodness and kindness of it, which is an unspeakably higher and more aggravated offence. Oh! that this might but enter into our souls, to consider how much there is of good-will towards men in laying upon them the obligation of such a law, which as it was first written in our own nature, so it is over and over, and more expressly, written again in his word! "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." A law in various forms and expressions so often repeated. Oh! that it might be considered, how much there is of kindness and benignity in it towards them, whom it doth so much concern! how much there is of good-will and favourable propensions expressed, when the primary design of the Divine law is to bring us to be happy creatures; that we should have laws laid upon us to be happy. This is the purport of the whole, as if the merciful Lawgiver should but speak this sense, (as indeed he hath spoken in his word, often and often, over and over, most fully,) Oh! be kind to yourselves! do not give up yourselves to perish. You have intelligent immortal spirits about you, that are capable of the same felicity with angels, those glorious creatures above. Do not abandon these spirits of yours unto remediless ruin, in a total neglect and unconcernedness about the salvation of your souls! do not plunge and sink them into an endless and incurable misery!

We are taught to account, that the very patience that God doth exercise towards men hath this kind design with it, that they might be saved. See his expostulations with sinners about this: Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering? not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance: but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works?" Rom. ii. 4, 5. The patience of God is intimated to have generally that aptitude in itself to induce men to consider and take up thoughts of returning; and most expressly, when the Gospel commenteth upon it, and tells men of its design. Why was not thy careless soul, that heard the Gospel the last Lord's day, cut off before this Lord's day? Why? the patience of God is leading it to repentance: so we are directly instructed to interpret. "My brethren, (saith that other apostle,) count the long-suffering of God salvation," 2 Peter iii. 15. Do you put that construction and sense upon it? Make that interpretation to yourselves, Why am I spared? I have been careless of God and my own soul so long, year after year, why am I spared? The apostle doth teach you to reckon, and make an estimate, why it is, what you are to count it is for; "Count that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation," (2 Peter iii. 15.) to wit, that he is designing your salvation in all this indulgence, and sparing mercy, that he exerciseth towards you. And it is highly aggravated guilt, when there is not only a continual resistance of the authority, but an offending constantly against the kindness, of a divine constitution. And,

6. You ought to consider, you are not your own. And though every one is obliged to intend, with the greatest earnestness, the salvation of his own soul, yet he is not to do it principally and supremely as his own; for God's interest is higher, and more principal in us, than ours can be in ourselves. And therefore, whereas we have a trust incumbent upon us from God, about ourselves, and the affairs of our own souls, he hath required us (though he be our supreme Keeper) to keep ourselves, to keep our own hearts with all diligence. Though our Lord Jesus Christ be our supreme Saviour, our great Saviour by office, yet we are required to save ourselves. Though God in Christ is our supreme Ruler, yet we are told too, that "he that hath not rule over his own spirit, is as a city broken down, and without walls." We have, by Divine charge and command, a care incumbent upon us about our own selves, about our own souls; but he is our owner, we are not our own owners.

It is a most horrid thing, when men will not be brought to know their owner. "The ox knoweth his owner," Isa. i. 3. And what? will not man know his owner? Will not these reasonable intelligent souls of ours know their owner, to whom they belong, who he is that styles himself the God of spirits, even of the spirits of all flesh? So that our having spirits in flesh, embodied spirits, is no diminution to his interest in us, and detracts nothing of it. When these spirits of ours are sunk into flesh, yet he is the God of the spirits of all flesh: they are his, he is the God of them. Then are we to consider besides, that inferior, secondary, subordinate interest that we have in ourselves, and our own souls: we are (I say) to consider God's superior interest in them, whose creatures we are. Then they who live in a total neglect and unconcernedness about the salvation of their souls, what answer will they be able to make to the most high God, when he comes to demand of them; "What have you done with my creature that I put under your care, in so great a measure? I trusted thee with the keeping and care of a soul, an immortal soul, an intelligent, spiritual being, stamped with my own natural image. I gave thee a soul capable of loving me, capable of being finally happy in me, capable of being, throughout an eternity, employed in the adoration and love of the eternal God. I gave thee such a soul, what hast thou done with it? What! hast thou made that soul all the time it dwelt in that body, only a drudge to vanity, only to serve as a slave to sensual and brutish inclination?"

God was to have eternal honour from those souls of ours, by our eternal love and adoration and praises of him, and joining with the glorious assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, in

these exercises. And when the wretched creature comes to give an account to God, as he must do; "Why hast thou robbed me of the eternal honour, glory, and praise that is due to me from this creature of mine? Why, instead of taking that way, by which it might be associated with the glorious inhabitants in heaven, hast thou taken that way by which it must come to herd itself with devils, and go to be employed an eternity, in cursing and blaspheming its Maker? Why hast thou thus used a soul which I gave thee, who am the Father of spirits? Was that soul of thine, while it dwelt in a body of flesh, capable of nothing but gratifying and pleasing brutish desires? capable of no higher thoughts than what are suitable to the body, to eat and drink, and to be clothed with? Was it capable of no thoughts of God? no thoughts of a future felicity? Why hath that soul been so injuriously, so abusively treated? I must have an account of my own creature, that should have honoured me, by the eternal love and fruition of me."

Sure these considerations should awaken us a little to that which I first recommended to you by way of direction, that we may, through the grace of God, agree in a resolution, more to mind the concernments of our salvation, than we hitherto have. It may be a great many will think themselves very innocent as to this matter, and not apprehend that there needs so much care about their souls and eternal concerns; but is not that to make our own imaginations superior to the determinations of God's express word? Doth that look as if he thought such a matter could be overcome, when he bids us, (as you have heard,) "Strive (the word signifies, be in agonies) to enter in at the strait gate." When any in that but now mentioned Scripture, have it made as the distinguishing character between them that shall finally be saved, and them that perish; that the one sort do, by patient continuance in well-doing, "seek for glory, honour, and immortality," till they actually have eternal life: and the other sort "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," are contentious against the truth; and therefore are to expect nothing but "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," for ever.

And is it not a very strange thing, that about inferior ends, men should think themselves concerned and obliged to use very great diligence; and every man is praised and commended among his neighbours, as he bears the character of a diligent man, an industrious man in his business? but that in reference to our last end, the universal end, the end of ends, that men should allow themselves in a universal carelessness and neglect, when every thing is greater as it approacheth nearer to the last end? There is a subordination of ends, but as any end comes nearer to the last, so it is greater, and the last greatest of all. Now that men should think it very reasonable to be very careful to get estates, to preserves their lives, and live well in the world, and yet think it reasonable to be negligent how they shall live for ever; what inconsistencies are these! There wants nothing but communing with ourselves, to make us apprehend and understand this, and to make ourselves uneasy to ourselves, till we find a redress. And this word would be an everlasting witness against us, if we should not depart now with a resolution (in dependance on the grace of God) more to mind the concernments of our salvation than ever we have done.

SERMON XXIII.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I SHALL now proceed in giving you further directions for the getting this noble principle cultivated and improved. And to that end, in the next place,

Direction 2. We should labour to extend our hope to its highest and utmost object, its supreme and ultimate object. According as we stretch it further, it works more, and it becomes so much the more a lively and potent thing in us. And do I need to tell what its supreme and ultimate object is? Our best good must be our highest hope, and you can be in no doubt what that is. "And now (Lord) what wait I for? my hope is in thee," Psal. xxxix. 7. "Why art thou cast down, oh! my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God," Psal. xlii. 5, 11. and xliii. 5. He must be to us, in respect of our hope, (as in respect of our choice, and love, and delight,) our only one. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. This is plain and out of question, God is to be our highest hope.

But concerning this, we are to note further, That it is God, as he is, most perfectly to be enjoyed in the most perfect state, that is to be the object of our hope: some shadow of which truth was in the mind of that noted philosopher, when he speaks of felicity, as that which is to be enjoyed in the most perfect state of life. But it is that which we are most deeply to consider, when we design God for the great object of our hope. It must be as he is to be enjoyed most perfectly, to wit, in the best and most perfect state. It is plain that that state is here referred to in this context, and in the text itself, if you will judge its reference by the context. Look to the words that do immediately precede; see whither their aspirings do aim and tend. "We who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies; for we are saved by hope." The hope of the final felicity and blessedness of that state, when there should be a perfect redemption of the body. It is a hope of felicity, which will be in its perfection, after being raised from the dead.

And this the apostle, by another significant name, calls the adoption; to wit, the solemn manifestation of the sons of God, as was the expression a little above, and as is intimated in another place. "Now we are the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be," 1 John iii. 1. Our sonship, and the glory and dignity of our adopted state, is not yet displayed or discovered what it is; but it shall be; and the time is coming when it shall: so that the like thing is intimated here, as did obtain among the Romans, to wit, that adoptions were with them two-fold. There was a private adoption that was preparatory, and leading to a following public one. Such a one doth first in private pitch upon such a person as he adopts for his own son, and afterwards there is a public notification thereof *in foro*; here it was declared with public solemnity. And it is in this latter sense, and in accommodation thereunto, that this perfect state of the sons of God is called the adoption.

And as we are to take heed lest any temporary or terrene thing should be designed by us, as the main and terminative object of our hope; so that that which is in its kind higher and better, and most noble and excellent, we must take heed lest itself be made the final term of our hope, in any state of imperfection, that things even of that kind do yet lie under. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are miserable creatures," 1 Cor. xv. 19. Our hope must shoot forward into another state, we must cast anchor into that which is within the veil, Heb. vi. 19. Even this anchor of hope. And again,

Direction 3. We must labour to have our minds well informed concerning that state which our hope is finally to terminate upon; not to content ourselves with a confused general idea of some great felicity hereafter, in another world, and after this life; but we must labour, as distinctly as we can, to apprehend what it is, and wherein it consists and lies; for our hope will be in its operations proportionably lively and vigorous, as our apprehensions concerning its objects are distinct and clear; our souls cannot be attracted, and drawn, and enlivened, and raised, by obscure and shadowy apprehensions only of that which we make its final object. And we are not in greater danger of wronging ourselves in any thing more than here, and about this matter.

The generality of men, the generality of them that live under the Gospel, and that call themselves Christians: oh, how little is understood among them of the truly Chris-

* Preached September 20th, 1691.

tian hope! The apostle prayeth for his Christian Ephesians, that they might know the hope of their calling; that they might understand what they are to hope for, what they are called to, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, that that might be understood. Men of carnal minds, they are apt accordingly to form the notion of all things, and where there is yet a prevailing carnality, even under the Gospel, men do take their measures of future felicity and misery, according to what notions they have of perfect good and evil; and their notions of present good and evil, they are taken only from the dictates of sense. Good and evil are estimated by us according to their accommodations or disaccommodations to flesh and sense; that is taken for good which is grateful to carnal sense; and that for evil that is ungrateful to it. And no higher are they wont to go; but what would be good or evil to an intelligent immortal mind and spirit, herein they little concern themselves for the most part.

And hence are the notions too common even among Christians of Mahometan paradises hereafter, or of paganish elysiums; indeed usually they go no further, when they are forming their notions of what is meant by salvation, than only to think of the privative part, and by that privative part, they mean only being freed from that which they think would be tormenting to the flesh; and because the Scripture doth make use of such phrases and forms of speech for our help, therefore are we wont to abuse them to our hurt, and to the depraving and narrowing of our minds and understandings touching these things; all the salvation that the most concern themselves about is, to be freed from fire and brimstone, that they think will torment the flesh; and the apprehension is dreadful, when they are told of such a state of torment as eternal and everlasting; but how much the more the mind and spirit of a man is a greater, and nobler, and more excellent thing than a little animated clay that he carries about with him, so much the more must the good and evil of the future state, which is accommodate to the mind and spirit, be greater and higher than any thing that flesh is capable of, in point either of enjoyment or suffering.

And it ought to be considered, that, whereas the happiness of an intelligent creature can only be in the fruition of God; I say it ought deeply to be considered, what it is to all eternity, to lose this enjoyment, and to be cut off from him: and this is the greatest of your salvation, to be saved from that misery which must of all things be most tormenting to an intelligent mind and spirit; to wit, I am cut off everlastingly from the enjoyment of that highest and best good whereof I was capable; I was capable of it, and have lost it.

Here is the sting and the fire of hell, its hottest fervour, and by this it is, that the soul must be the everlasting tormentor itself. This is it that gives the ground for those (*morsus*) bitings, wounds, and gnawings of the worm that never dies. Oh, that I should debase a mind, a spirit; so noble a thing, so excellent a thing; to a capacity only of converse with earthly things, and thereby to lose for ever the enjoyment of the blessed God, as having lost my capacity for it, stifled it myself, and therewith lost my interest in it: and so as that thereupon Divine justice might do an equal thing, and a becoming thing, and that God might do like himself, as became himself; I should therefore hear from him, "Depart from me, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" Go, accursed creature, into the state which thou choosest.

A salvation from such misery as this, you must labour distinctly to understand, to be the great object of your hope. I hope through the grace of God I shall be saved from this, from ever having things brought to this sad and forlorn pass with me. And so by salvation, though it sound privative, yet is chiefly meant that which is most highly positive; and lest we should mistake sometimes, we find this positive added in express terms, "salvation by Christ Jesus, with eternal glory," 2 Tim. ii. 10.

This (I say) we must labour to understand distinctly, that so our hope may operate strongly and vigorously, as it will according to the apprehension that we have of the object of it, when this comes to be distinctly understood; (inasmuch as the way of the Spirit's working upon the minds and souls of men is suitable to their own intelligent and rational nature;) the life and vigour that Spirit doth exert, and put forth in this way upon the souls of men, it is so much the higher, and so much the more efficacious, by how much the apprehensions are clearer about the things in which I hope, or for which I hope.

When once this is understood, then will the soul say, (if once it be reduced to a capacity of acting like itself; to wit, like an intelligent thing,) What? shall I for a trifle lose so great a hope? Then the Gospel looks big, and appears great in our view. And what? shall I lose all this? all this glory, all this felicity, and all that fulness of joy that is to be eternal, for a trifle? for the gratifying my own lust, or pleasing my own fancy, or the fancy of a friend, as he calls himself? But he is, indeed, my greatest enemy, as I am in truth the greatest enemy to myself, while I am apt to be imposed upon by such delusive appearances and semblances of things, against my own good and interest. Shall I for the pleasure of a debauch in company, as vain as I can be, ruin so great a hope as this? "He that hath this hope in him purifies himself as God is pure." But then also,

Direction 4. You must take this further direction, to wit, when you have got the notion in any measure competently clear, concerning the state of salvation, the felicity and glory of the future state, then labour most firmly and steadfastly to believe it. You must have a right notion of it first, else you believe you know not what. But let me have never so distinct a notion of the best and most delectable state that can be thought of, it never affects me, nor can rationally, unless I believe it to be a reality. The most pleasing ideas cannot draw forth rational endeavours, unless I be possessed with the apprehension, that it is a real attainable good that I am to act for.

Therefore, to that purpose, consider, I pray you, what the apostle gives us of the notion of that faith which is to be indeed immediately fundamental of our hope, Heb. xi. 1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; if one have never so clear a notion of the most delectable state that it is possible for any one to form and conceive in his own mind, and he doth not look upon this as substantial, as an actual substance, it cannot affect him, it cannot attract him, and draw forth the strength and vigour of his soul in a pursuit after it: therefore, here the work of faith comes in; and that is to substantiate, to be to us the very substance of that which we are to hope for, and to be the evidence of that which yet we do not see. And how could faith do this? Why truly even by that which is intrinsical and natural to it; reliance upon his testimony whom we believe. Human faith is a reliance upon a human testimony; divine faith is a reliance upon a divine testimony. I take the word of God about the truth of that I have not seen with my own eyes; and his word representing to me a lovely, pleasant, amiable object hereafter, perfectly to be enjoyed; believing the revelation to be true, I thereupon hope for the thing revealed.

As suppose an overture were made to any of you of making a purchase of an estate in lands where you have not been, or which you do not know; it may be you may have some friend or other that hath been there, and that can give a true and distinct description, and tell you how all things lie; he tells you how very commodious and pleasant a seat there is, or may easily be had: why according as you believe, or disbelieve this man's report, this testimony of his, so is your hope of doing well, and living happily in such a place, lively or not lively, vivid or faint and languid; according (I say) as you believe him, or do not believe him, you having not seen the thing with your own eyes.

This is the case here, God hath told us how it is above, in that state where we have not been, what is to be enjoyed there, what our employments are to be, what our company, and what our state every way. Saith the considering soul, It is true, I have not been in the third heavens, I do not know the order of things there by any experience of my own; but I believe in him that hath told me this; I know he can have no design to deceive me; what can he get by imposing on a worm? when he hath made such a discovery and sworn to it; As I live, so and so it is, and so it shall be. By these two immutable things I apprehend

it to be impossible for God to lie: therefore here is strong consolation for them to fly to for refuge, who have this hope set before them, Heb. vi. 18, 19, 20.

But how much another thing is that faith which thus relies upon, and resolves itself into the authority of the Divine word, over-awing the soul into an entire acquiescence in the truth of it, and so as to still and silence all abmurmurations and mutterings to the contrary: I dare not think otherwise but that thus it is. How much more (I say) another thing is this faith, which so substantiates its object in this way and method, from that which vulgarly goes under the name of faith among us! The common opinion that men have, that there is a world to come, and so and so men may enjoy or suffer in that other world, that is a mere traditional belief of these things, without ever considering the true and proper grounds why we admit any such belief into our minds and hearts at all; but we believe, because such and such have so told us. It is the common belief, all the people of our country were of this mind, all our forefathers were of this mind; but God, and the authority of his revelation, comes not into the case, never falls into consideration at all.

And this faith, as it is groundless, so it is fruitless; for the ground of faith, and efficacy of it, measure one another; faith is always proportionably efficacious as it is grounded well and strongly; that which depends upon nothing doth nothing, effects nothing. It is very plain, that for this common faith which men have about a future state, and which is nothing else but opinion, mere opinion, and nothing more; it effects nothing, operates nothing, it leaves men's hearts the same; and accordingly the course of their practice is the same too, as if they were of quite a contrary belief. What a strange faith is that which, instead of power and efficacy, for the forming of the heart and governing the life, is just the same thing with infidelity, not distinguishable from infidelity; but in point of efficacy, faith and infidelity are the same! This man's heart is as terrene as it would have been if he had been of no such belief, or of a quite contrary belief: and his practice as loose and irregular, having as little tendency in it towards the attainment of such a blessed state as he pretends to believe.

Pagans have seemed to have higher thought of faith than we have. Cicero tells us that among them (the Romans) there were shrines and temples dedicated to faith and hope, as being certain tokens that God did dwell in those minds where these are; so he speaks of them; whereupon they dedicated temples to them. When in those minds faith and hope did dwell, they looked upon these as certain evidences that God did dwell in those minds. But I beseech you, what argument is there to be taken from the faith and hope of these great futurities that are commonly pretended to among us, that God dwells in these minds? What evidence is there of an in-dwelling Deity, who raised these men, so sublime, so full of heaven, so full of holy aspirings? What is there like this, as the fruit of that faith and hope which are talked of, and pretended to amongst us? And then,

Direction 5. Take this direction, see that when you understand and do believe what the word of God informs us of, concerning the state of salvation, that is to be the final object of our hope, see (I say) that you do seriously desire it; that it is that which the inclination of our minds carries us to, so as earnestly to long for and covet it. Oh, that I were there! Oh, that I were possessed of the felicities and glories of that state! Otherwise, if you talk of hope of such a state, for which you do not find you have any real lively desires in your souls; you impose an impossible task upon yourselves, and a contradiction. It is a perfect contradiction to hope for that which we do not desire, or to which the temper of our mind agrees not. If there be not an agreeableness in the frame of the heart and spirit unto such a state understood and believed, it can be no object of our hope. I may desire many things that I do not hope for, but I cannot hope for any thing that I do not desire; for hope always involves desire, though desire doth not always involve hope in it. There may be despairing desires, but hope hath for its object a future good, the same that desire hath; only hope doth superadd something to its object; (though that alters not the case as to this;) to wit, an apprehended difficulty, an arduousness as to the thing hoped for; otherwise desire and hope would be all one.

And about this it concerns us to deal very seriously and closely with ourselves, when we speak of hope as that mighty principle, which is to have influence towards salvation, by the influence whereof we are to be saved; (and are lost if that influence fail, and continue not;) we are to consider what we are to aim at, when we are to aim at the getting our souls possessed with such a hope; we must get them made suitable to the state hoped for; that we may be capable of desiring it; that our souls may fall in with it; that whereas that state commenceth at the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may be of those that love his appearing upon that account. And whereas it is the hope of a future felicity, by the power whereof grace teacheth men effectually to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world;" that hope may be looked on by us as a blessed hope, "looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," the very thought whereof (for their hope is taken objectively) is reviving to our souls, makes our hearts spring and leap in us. If you do not desire the thing hoped for, it can never be a blessed hope to you; you cannot look upon it as such: one thought of that hope, that hope but thought of, doth even bless my soul, doth make it live, diffuseth a vital influence through it.

That which is inconsistent with this is a terrene frame that continually carries us downward, a minding earthly things, that upon the account whereof the apostle speaks with tears concerning many of those Philippian Christians, to whom he writes. "I have told you of them, (saith he,) and I now tell you, weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ;" that is, to the very design of his dying, which was to establish an eternal kingdom, a kingdom that is not of this world; they are enemies to his very cross; why, what doth characterize them as such? Their minding earthly things. The design of his dying runs into eternity, into heaven; our conversation is in heaven, as the next words speak; but these men are all for this earth, nothing else is pleasing and grateful to them. If you give them hopes of great honour, and dignities, and riches in this world, you take them by the heart; but tell them of the felicity of another world, you do but speak to them the words of a dream, they are mere shadows you present to their imaginations, things which they affect not, in which they feel no substance; there is nothing grateful to them in these things.

Always carry this about with you, that it is a most perfect mockery to talk of hope of that which you desire not. "I desire (saith the apostle) to be dissolved and to be with Christ:" this is their strain who are under the power of the truly Christian hope: not as if such actual desires were the constant character of a regenerate soul, because there may be some accidental interveniences that may damp that act of desire, may interrupt and hinder it; to wit, they may be in doubt about the state of their ease God-wards. Therefore, they cannot be positive in desiring to be unclothed and dissolved; but if the competition be between the felicity of the future state, and the felicity of the present state; and their no desire doth proceed from the greater love that they have to this world than they have to God, and to heaven, and the purity, and sinlessness, and blessedness of the future state; this is a mortal character; and concerning such we can pronounce nothing but that "they are enemies to the cross of Christ," the design of his dying, as if he died for men only, to procure for them an earthly felicity; as if his dying were only to terminate upon an earthly happy state, than which a greater hostility to the cross of Christ, and against the design of his dying, cannot be. And again,

Direction 6. Take this further direction; to wit, when you have that object before you, in its clear and distinct state, which is to be the final object of your hope, never hope for that abstractly, and separately by itself, so as to disjoin in your hope the end from the necessary means to that end, salvation, the state of the saved; here is the final object of hope; but then we are told by the apostle, of things that do "accompany salvation," Heb. vi. 9. Never

hope for salvation abstractly and apart from the things that do accompany it, and because that is to be considered as the final object of your hope, the things that are intermediate to it, are to be hoped for too; for there can be no connexion besides between the end and the means; but that connexion lies in the aptitude such means have to this end, and the certainty of the consecution of this end, upon the use of such means. You are told of several things in Scripture that have certain connexion with salvation, so that without them it cannot be; with them it cannot but be. As to give you only the Scripture terms of the several things, that it doth connect with salvation as inseparable from it, without explaining the things to you: as repentance, it connects with it; "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" (Luke xviii. 5.) ye shall not be saved. "Repent, that your sins may be blotted out," Acts iii. 19. by it you shall be saved.—Faith; God so loved the world, that "he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 3, 5.—Regeneration, without it there is no entering into the kingdom of God, there is no seeing of it; but if men be regenerate, they are the children of God; and if they are children, then heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, that, suffering with him, they may be glorified together," Rom. viii. 17.—Obedience; Christ will be the author of salvation to them that obey him, Heb. v. 9. "And will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know him not, nor obey his Gospel," 2 Thess. i. 8. These are the plainest connexions that can be in the world, nothing can be more plain; so sanctification which falls in with many of the fore-mentioned things: "We give thanks to God for you, that he hath chosen you unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 13, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

This is the direction then, that at present I would leave with you; never be so vain as to hope for the end apart from these things, God having made a necessary connexion between it and them, as means thereunto, with which it shall certainly be attained, and without which it cannot. There are means indeed that are foreign and external, (as divines are wont to distinguish them from these,) which have no certain connexion with the end, as these have; but for those which have so certain a connexion with it, it is to murder your own hope, to hope for the end without regarding the means; to hope I shall be saved, whether I repent or no, believe or no, turn to God or no, be regenerate or no, be sanctified or no, whether I obey or disobey. This is to hope without, and to hope against it; and it is the greatest foolery in the world, for a man to hope against God's word, for that which depends wholly on his pleasure, whose word it is. Who can save me if he do not? Who can bring me heaven if he do not? So that to hope in this case, not only without his word, but against it; no greater madness than this is conceivable, or can be, among men.

SERMON XXIV.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

Direction 7. I shall now go on with some further directions, and in the next place, take this.

That such need to make it much their business to understand aright the nature of those things which are so absolutely necessary to being saved; to wit, not only to know that such and such things, so and so called, are requisite; or to understand the names of such as are requisite unto salvation, without distinct understanding of the things themselves, signified by those names. There is nobody that understands any thing of the Christian religion, but hath been informed, and will readily assent, that repentance is necessary to salvation; that faith is necessary to salvation; that a man if he be not regenerate cannot be saved; that if he be not converted he is not in the state of salvation; that if he do not mortify sin he must die, he must perish, and cannot be saved; that if he do not lead a life of holiness, he can never see God, must be excluded his presence for ever. Every one that lives under the Gospel and understands the first elements and principles of it, readily assents to all these things; but in the mean time if one do inquire what they do understand by the things signified by such names, here they are at a loss, and to seek, and give such confused and uncertain accounts, or have so indistinct apprehensions of them, that they are never the nearer being saved for having heard of those names; but I beseech you, what can it signify, if, when God saith, they that do not believe, his wrath abideth on them; and he hath "so loved the world, that he hath given his only-begotten Son, that they that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" you do agree to the faith of this that God hath said in his word, you say so too; but in the mean time you intend one thing by believing, when God, it is manifest, meaneth another. You put the name of faith, the name of repentance, the name of conversion, and the name of regeneration, upon quite another thing; What! will the names of these things save any body? Will any be the nearer salvation for something miscalled faith, that is not so? something miscalled repentance, something miscalled regeneration, that are not so?

If you would rationally hope for salvation, so as that hope should really signify any thing for that end, you must understand the real influences and import of such things as these, that God hath put as necessary to salvation, and in immediate connexion with it. That is, you must understand faith in Christ to be that which brings your souls into a vital, living union with him, so as that thereby you have him, and have life; such a receptive act as adjoins you to him, so as that he thereupon becomes an immediate spring of life to your souls. If you do not understand by repentance, that mighty turn and change of the whole soul, by which, when it was a stranger to God before and alienated from him, it is now entirely turned to him, and therefore it is called repentance towards God; the whole bent of the soul being turned about towards God, as its best good, and as its sovereign Lord, to whom it was a stranger and rebel before; you do not apprehend aright. It is a vain thing for us to go about to delude ourselves with names; the great thing will be, what will be taken for faith and repentance, and the rest of the mentioned things, in the judgment day; and we may know now, if we will make it our business to know, and compare Scripture with Scripture, one thing with another. Those that will yield the necessity of regeneration, understand nothing (it may be) by being regenerate but being baptized; when the Scripture elsewhere tells us in other words, it signifies our implantation into Christ, we are born again, as we are inserted into him, and being in him, become new creatures; old things being done away, and all things being made new; such things as these, that you will in certain immediate connexion with salvation; you must understand what they are, if you will ever think of entertaining hope of salvation, for such a purpose as that it shall contribute to your being saved. And;

Direction 8. Take this further direction, if you will ever hope to purpose in reference to the business of salvation, begin your hope with despair: despair, that you may hope, that is, that you may hope to any advantage. There is none in whom this hope comes to live, (as it is a living hope that we are speaking of, and that the Spirit of God intends,) but there must be a death past upon that soul, before such living hope doth obtain, or hath place in it; such must die that they may live; must be slain, that they may revive. All false hope must die, they must see themselves dead, lost, and perishing, before any such hope can have place in them; but here I must be a little more particular, and tell such of some things, whereof it is most necessary that they do despair. As, first, they must despair of ever being saved without those things, which you have already heard are necessary to salvation. And then,

* Preached October 11th, 1691.

secondly, they must despair of ever being saved, *for* such things as are to be wrought in them, or done by them. And, thirdly, they must despair of ever attaining those things by their own power.

1. They must despair of ever being saved, without those things which have been already mentioned to you, that must be wrought in us, and that, thereupon, must have an exercise from us in order to our being saved; to wit, such as are repentance to God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the like; despair of ever being saved without these, and what goes accompanied therewith, (about priority I have no mind to trouble you with any discussion,) the full entire work of conversion, which, consider it seminally, is the same with regeneration: consider it progressively, it is the same with continued sanctification, proceeding hereupon; a dying to sin, and living to righteousness. The same design for which Christ died, and bare our sins in his "body on the tree;" (1. Peter ii. 24.) that we might "die to sin, and live to righteousness," being healed by his stripes, Isa. liii. 5. Now without these things, we must despair of being saved, if ever we would hope for salvation upon good terms.

This I know is that way which a heart yet habitually carnal cannot but deeply and inwardly regret; but that is not to give us laws. The carnal heart was not consulted in framing and contriving the model of the Gospel. God did never ask such the question, what will please you, that I may contrive the form and model of life and death, according to your inclination? Such may be apt to say, when they are urged, You must break off from every evil way; you must hate every thing of sin, how much soever you formerly loved it; you must deliver yourselves absolutely to the governing power of Jesus Christ as your Redeemer and Lord, both at once; when persons (I say) come to be closely thus urged, they will be apt to tell you, We have flesh and blood about us; what would you have us do? Why, I would put such upon considering seriously, Pray, for whom was the Gospel composed? To what sort of creatures was it sent? Was it ever designed or intended to be sent up into heaven, to be preached to angels and glorious spirits above? Was it ever intended to be sent down into hell, to be preached to devils and damned spirits there? No; it was meant for none but those that have flesh and blood about them; for none but them whose dwelling is in flesh. And would any excuse himself from repenting towards God, which is turning to him with the whole heart and soul; from believing in Christ by such a faith, as by which a vital union shall be contracted between the soul and him; with this, that he hath flesh and blood about him? That is by the same excuse too, to excuse yourselves from being saved: I am not to be saved, because I have flesh and blood about me. For it is a vain imagination to think that God is at this time to alter his Gospel, and make new terms of life and death for sinners; when as this Gospel, as it was only made for such as dwell in flesh, or have flesh and blood about them. It is true, that hath inferred a necessity, that that in which you dwell should not rule you. If we live after the flesh, we shall die; but if through the Spirit we do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. How plainly doth the word of God speak his mind to us, if we will attend to it! That, therefore, is one of the things that you must despair of, if you will hope to purpose; despair of ever being saved without such things to be wrought and done in you, as God has put in immediate and certain connexion with salvation. And,

2. Despair too of ever being saved for those things that are to be acted by us, or wrought in us: though they are works of the Holy Ghost, yet the Holy Ghost was not intended to merit for us; the Holy Ghost was not to be our High Priest, we must not think to invest the Holy Ghost with the offices of Christ, and to confound their offices, and the works of their offices. Therefore, let repentance be supposed never so sincere; and faith, conversion, and regeneration, never so true in their own kind; we must despair of being saved for these things, though we must also despair of ever being saved without them. "We through the Spirit do wait for the hope of righteousness by faith," Gal. v. 5. The Spirit doth frame souls to an absolute reliance upon that righteousness that is by faith, that and no other, and so accordingly to wait for the hope of that righteousness. And,

3. Despair of ever attaining to any of these things that are so necessary by your own power; despair of ever being able to turn yourselves, or to beget faith in yourselves, or to regenerate yourselves, or to mortify sin yourselves, which you are told must be by the Spirit. The Scripture will not misguide us if we will attend to it: how plainly hath it told us, that our Lord Jesus Christ "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins!" Acts v. 31. And that it is God that gives men repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, "who are led captive by him at his will," 2 Tim. ii. 26. And faith we are told is the gift of God, and it is reckoned among "the fruits of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22. And regeneration we are told is by the Spirit. If a man be not born again (or born from above) by the Spirit, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 3, 6. "And if we by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live," Rom. viii. 13. And we are likewise told, that "God hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 17.

Therefore are we to despair of our reaching of those things, that are so necessary to our salvation, by any power of our own. And so to despair is the way to hope; that will not lead to absolute despair, but it only leads to this respective necessary despair, which doth itself lead to hope. It doth not make the case hopeless, that such a thing is out of my power, when it is not to be expected, except in that godlike way that is honourable to him, and becomes the enthroned Majesty of heaven, that he should be owned and applied unto as the author and donor of every good and perfect gift, and perfect giving. And we shall miserably cheat ourselves, if ever we think or hope to be saved by a repentance, or faith, or conversion, that are self-sprung things, self-created things. That repentance which is only the product of our own power, or that faith, or that conversion, will lure us, will lead us to perish; but you have heard often, again and again, that the thing is not the less matter of hope, because it is not in our own power, when as the Divine power that is to effect such things is upon such sure and firm grounds to be expected and looked for, that it should exert itself for such and such purposes; but to that purpose more will come in our way by and by; these are things that it is fit and needful that you should despair of that you may hope. And,

Direction 9. Take this further direction hereupon, That you are to put forth all your power to the very utmost, in order to the attaining those things that do accompany salvation, and that are in so necessary and certain connexion with it. Your life lies upon it:—without these things you must perish. There is no remedy, but you must perish. What remains then? but that you do, to the uttermost, put forth all the power you have, in order to your serious repentance, in order to your believing with the faith of God's elect, and with a faith of the operation of God; and that you may have new hearts and right spirits created and renewed in you.

Objection. But it may be said, Doth not this contradict the former head? Are we to use all our power, even to the uttermost, in order to the obtaining true repentance and true faith, and that we may be truly regenerate and turned unto God, when yet we are told, we must utterly despair of ever attaining these things by our own power?

Answer. Pray labour to understand matters that are in themselves plain. What is easier to understand, than the distinction between use and trust? Doth it follow, that because you are to distrust your own power, that therefore you are not to use it? May not a man lawfully use his money, and use his estate, because he is forbid to trust in uncertain riches? And because some do sinfully trust in chariots and horses, is it therefore unlawful to use a chariot or a horse? Consider that the natural faculties and powers that God hath given you, you are to be accountable for the use of to him. And what? are you not then to use them? Your understandings, your considering power, your thinking power, are these exempt, from under the divine government, because you are not to trust them, as what were sufficient to do all your business? If you would but co

sider things with the understandings of men, you might easily know, that it is most indispensably incumbent upon us to do our uttermost, to strive as for our lives, to exert all our powers, while, in the mean time, we acknowledge all our power is an insufficient thing. And therefore we are to cry and supplicate, to crave and implore heaven, for the addition of a higher and greater power than ours. This is just, this is rational, and suitable to the order of things between God and his intelligent creatures. And then again,

Direction 10. Let this further direction be considered, to wit, Constantly hope, that, by the Divine power, you shall be enabled to reach and attain to those things that are, and he hath made necessary, for your salvation. And this hath two branches,

1. Constantly hope you shall attain them otherwise, if you do not hope that hope, all is lost, and you are presently at a stand, and cannot move one step further towards being saved, or towards salvation as your end. All is lost if that hope fail, that you shall attain those things that are necessary, by divine appointment and constitution, for salvation. For pray consider, if a man take a journey, (supposing of a hundred miles,) if he did not hope he should go through that journey, he would never begin it. It is the hope he shall go through, that doth excite and engage to begin, otherwise he would sit still at home; but then, if he doth hope that he shall go through this journey of a hundred miles, and reach such a place at length, he must hope, in order hereunto, that he shall go through the first mile. He cannot hope that he shall go the whole hundred miles, if he do not hope he shall go the first. So if you do hope you shall be saved, you must hope that you shall do things, be enabled to do things, that are necessary to being saved. He that doth not hope to reach a place but a mile off, that is his certain and direct way to a place a hundred miles off, and there is no other way, will never make one step at all towards that place. And this is your case, when God hath made it so absolutely necessary in order to your being saved, that you repent, that you turn to him, and come into union with his Son, and deliver yourselves up to him, take him to be yours, and give yourselves to be his; if you hope not you shall reach these things, your hope of being saved will be a mad hope; as his must be a mad hope that he shall reach his hundred miles, when he doth not hope to reach the first mile, when there is no other way to such a place a hundred miles off, but by that a mile off. And therefore this hope must be fixed and kept alive, though I cannot say I have been brought to repentance yet, and to faith in the Son of God, yet I hope I shall. You must hope first for such a thing. And then,

2. Hope that it shall be brought about by a divine power, for otherwise, (as you have heard,) you are not to hope for it. And positively, you must hope for it in this way, and no other way. "According as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness; and given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we might be partakers of the Divine nature," (2 Peter i. 3, 4.) which carries all this in it. Here must be your hope. Such things have not been wrought and done in me yet, but through the grace of God, I hope that they shall. And,

Direction 11. Take heed that defeatments and delays do not subvert and overthrow in you this hope. Of this there is the greatest imaginable danger; and these two expressions (defeatments and delays) I purposely intend to refer to two sorts of persons, who may have their different concerns in this direction, to wit, especially, a younger and an elder sort.

1. A younger sort, such as may be in a very great struggle between strong youthful lusts, and strong convictions, which may in some measure have taken hold of their souls. This is sometimes the case, discourses that I have had with divers, and bills that I have received from more, do assure me that this is a case that requires a great place and room in our consideration and discourse. There are those who now and then (who in that age wherein lust and concupiscence have greater advantages to be predominant) are taken hold of by the word, and it strikes conscience, and gets some advantages upon them. They are in a great loss in their own spirits. Vicious inclinations are strong; conviction upon their spirits hath some strength too. It may be, some such have found, that whereas here is a struggle, a strong earnest struggle, the conquest is easier over conscience than over inclination: it is an easier matter to overcome there; they easier baffle their light than they can their lusts. And when they have considered, under the power of conviction, that there was some necessity upon them to change their course, it may be, they have come to some resolution upon that consideration, that they would become other men; that they would lead another sort of life. It may be, the next temptation, or the next insinuation of a lewd, idle companion, hath proved too hard and too strong for them; they could not withstand; and the bonds of iniquities have held them faster than the bonds of their vows, and covenants, and solemn engagements, that they have taken upon their souls. They have broken loose from these bonds, and are held so much the faster by those former bonds: and hereupon, having once found themselves at liberty, they sell themselves to slavery, sell themselves to do evil; and the Spirit of God that was at work in them, is receded and gone; they began in the Spirit, they have ended in the flesh. There are now no more gales, not one breath of that Spirit upon their spirits any more. A hopeful gale they had, that brought them near to a safe harbour; but they are, all on a sudden, hurried back again to a raging sea, that casts up nothing but mire and dirt. What a fearful case is this! If they reflect upon themselves, they will be ready to say, What is to be done in this case? And truly if any one should say to me, I should return the question, What will you do in this case? or what do you think is to be done in this case? Do you think there is no hope in the case? Will you say that? or if there is to be any hope, what shall that hope be of? or what are you to hope for? Such a thing I would consider and debate with any such a one. Are you to have any hope at all? Are you to abandon all hope? Truly that is not like a reasonable creature to say so, that you are to abandon all hope, while you are yet on this side hell, and infernal flames have not yet seized you; you are not to put yourself into the state of a devil, whilst as yet God hath not put you into that state. But if you are to hope at all, what are you to hope for? Are you to hope that God will save you upon other terms than he hath declared in his Gospel? Are you to hope that he will make a new Gospel, to comply with your humour and lustful inclination? Are you to hope for that? That certainly were the maddest hope that ever was taken up by any one. All hope you are to have is, that if you have any apprehension of your case, the grieved Spirit may return, the affronted, resisted Spirit, if you cry for its return; if you supplicate as for life, that Spirit that carries all the treasures of Divine light, and life, and grace in it, may yet return. There have been instances of its having done so.

How famous is the story that we meet with in Church History, concerning that vicious young man, that was at first reduced by the ministry of the apostle John, and brought to a great degree of seriousness! The apostle, having occasion to absent himself from the place where he was, leaves him under the care of such a one, charging him with his soul; "Look (saith he) well to the soul of this young man." After the apostle was gone, the young man breaks out into his former excesses again, and herds himself with a company of thieves and cut-throats. The apostle being returned, and inquiring after him, saying, What is become of that young man? The answer that was made him was, He is dead, dead in sin, dead in wickedness again: much like the usage that was in Pythagoras's school, where if any had been in that school of virtue, and made some proficiency there for any considerable time, and relapsed into vice, they were solemnly cast out, and a coffin was brought into the place to hold a funeral for them as dead; so it was said of this young man, he was dead. But the apostle makes inquiry after him, and finds him out, brings him to his feet, takes hold of him, down he falls, and by the power of prayer and holy counsel, he was effectually reduced, and brought back again.

So it may yet be with some such horrid decliners and backsliders from the ways of God. If they apprehend whither they are going, whither their way leads them, and

cry for the returning of the Holy Ghost as for life, as apprehending themselves lost if he return not, there is yet hope in this case. And it is by no means in the world to be thought of, that such are to abandon all hope; for that is to make devils of themselves above ground, and to create to themselves a present hell on this side hell. You are within the reach of the Gospel while you are on this side of the infernal regions; and it is a Gospel of grace, crying to you, Return,—return. These are they to whom I had reference in that word defeats; do not let your hope be destroyed by the defeats you have met with. But then,

2. There is another sort that I had a more distinct reference to in my thoughts, in using the word delays, in this direction, Take heed lest defeatments and delays destroy your hope. Now that of delays I meant in reference to such as have sat long under the Gospel, even to a grown age, and never have found any good effect by it; it hath wrought no change, made no impression. There may be many such, that were never vicious persons at all, never grossly vicious; but then they have lived in a place where some exercises of religion were a fashionable thing. They have had religion enough to carry them to a sermon on the Lord's day in some Christian assembly, and perhaps to engage in somewhat of family duties; perhaps so, but they have sat with mere formality the greatest part of a lifetime, under the Gospel, and never felt any real good by it, never expected any, never designed any; but come to a church, or a meeting-house, and spend an hour or two with the rest, in solemn attendances upon the worship of God, and never look after it more, (it may be,) till the week come about again. All their business is driving designs for this earth; "They mind earthly things," as the apostle's character is of them, of whom also he saith, "their end is destruction," Phil. iii. 18, 19. What it was to have their souls turned to God, to come to a solemn closure with Christ as their Redeemer and Lord, or to exercise themselves unto inward heart-godliness in any kind, they know not what belongs to it. It may be, they are just and upright in their dealings with those with whom they have to do; and they reckon that their justice towards men must expiate all their injustice towards God, their neglect of him, their slighting him, their casting him out of their thoughts, out of their fear, and out of their desires.

This seems to be a very sad case, that a man should have lived all his days under the Gospel, and it hath never made any impression on him as yet: the Spirit of God hath not as yet sensibly breathed, so as, at least, to beget any permanent and abiding effect; here hath been a long deferring, a long delaying of taking hold of these souls to purpose; and it may be, now their long delay may make such persons think, No, there is no change to be hoped for, nothing to be expected, none to be looked for; I have sat so long, so many years, ten, twenty, or thirty, (it may be,) forty years, under the Gospel, under such a ministry, and never hath there been any such effect wrought upon me, and I do not think there ever will.

Oh! take heed, lest the having any such work upon you deferred so long, do destroy hope that ever such work shall be done; for then again, all is lost if you be hopeless; if there be not a vital hope and expectation, from time to time, in such and such a word, that some good may be done in my soul, that I may hear somewhat that I may feel, that the word may yet drop that may have life in it, that may have power in it. If you do not hope for this, if you do not expect such a thing, you are, as much as you can, putting yourselves quite out of the way of being saved, or having the reasonable hope of it; for still I must say, you are not to expect a new Gospel, that God will save you without those necessary pre-requisites to salvation, without repentance, without faith, without conversion, and without sanctification. And therefore in the last place,

Direction 12. That which I would lastly add, by way of direction to this sort of persons, is, that you would see to it, that though hope in these cases must not be thrown away, that yet it be qualified with such concomitants as are proper and suitable in such a case. They are such as these; I will but name them, that the next time my discourse may directly respect the other case, that of perseverance.

1. *Prayer*. Your hope in such a case as this must always be accompanied with prayer. It must be praying, supplicating hope. It is suitable to your case, if you hope to pray; and never hope without prayer. When we are exhorted to take to ourselves the "helmet," which we are told "is the hope of salvation," it is presently subjoined, "praying always with all prayer and supplication," Eph. vi. 17. with 1 Cor. v. 8. These must be conjunct; if we hope, we must continue to pray. Give yourselves to prayer, to all prayer and supplication, otherwise we do (as much as possible) blast all our hope, and it can never be a helmet to us; it will betray our head, not cover it, not protect it.

2. *Deep humility*. Join deep humility with your hope. Let it be humble hope. Such a one should "put his mouth in the dust, if there might be any hope," Lam. iii. 29. And,

3. *Self-loathing*. Join with it self-loathing, self-abhorrence; not only of yourselves as mean creatures, but as vile and odious; and yet hope, join hope with that self-abasing temper, self-loathing of the publican: then will your sense be, (as his,) "God be merciful to me a sinner," who it is said at last went away justified and accepted. If you be fair in your own eyes, if your sense be that of the Laodicean church, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked;" you have no place in you for that hope that will do you any good; but such self-reviling thoughts, "If I were perfect, yet would I not know my own soul, I would despise my life;" how well doth hope do in such a tempered spirit as this! How suitable a soil is this for that heavenly hope to grow and flourish in! And,

4. *Watchfulness*. Join to your hope watchfulness and vigilancy. Watchfulness may respect both God and yourselves. Watchfulness respecting God is exercised in continual looking towards him; when shall that happy time come? when shall any beam of light descend? when shall any influence of grace flow in? Watchfulness respecting yourselves is exercised in watching over a treacherous heart; and know, that whenever you are to design such a thing, as your own salvation, and so accordingly to hope for it, a main, and principal, and immediate object of your hope must be, that you shall be saved from yourselves; and thereupon indeed, it is a most self-contradicting hope, to hope I shall be saved, without hoping that sin shall be overcome. I shall gain the conquest at last over predominating corrupt inclinations, whether more grossly sensual ones, or whether avaricious ones, or ambitious ones, and the like; for do not you know, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath therefore his name of Jesus, a Saviour, because he was to save his people from their sins: and do you think you shall be saved, without being saved from yourselves, your sinful selves? This is to hope you shall be saved without salvation; this is to hope with such a hope, as wherewith you shall tear a thing from itself, to hope you shall be saved without being saved. If ever you are to be saved, you are to be saved from yourselves; and therefore, yourselves are to be the great object of your watchfulness, your continual vigilancy; watching over yourselves, as your worst and most dangerous enemy. I am to fear hell from myself, death from myself, a curse from myself; and lest I be a continual spring of all misery and wo to myself, there must be a continual watchfulness over ourselves, to repress all ebullitions of corrupt nature at the first. Oh this lustful heart! this proud heart! this ambitious heart! this sensual heart! A severe self-inspection into, and watchfulness over ourselves, is that which must be in conjunction with hope. Watch and hope, be sober and hope to the end. That spiritual sobriety carries vigilancy in it, a continual watchfulness over yourselves. And again,

5. *Patience*. This hope must be accompanied with patience. Doth not the context tell you so? "We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." God is not bound to your time, he hath not come in yet; suppose he do not strike that stroke upon your heart this day, that is necessary to your being saved. Why hope that he will the next day, or the next after that: "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." "Blessed is he that watcheth at the doors," that waiteth

at the posts of wisdom's gates; "for he that findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour from the Lord," Prov. viii. 34. 35. I have not met with him that is to be the life of my soul yet; but I will wait, I will miss no opportunity, I will be always at the posts of wisdom's door, I may find him at last, who will be the life of my soul; and there all my hopes and all my concernments are involved and wrapt up together. And in the last place,

6. *Diligence.* You must join diligence with hope; an industrious, laborious diligence. It must be a working, operative hope, like that of the husbandman, who plougheth in hope, and soweth in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope, as the apostle's allusion is; so must you, as to this spiritual husbandry in which you must be engaged, you must strive in hope, and labour in hope. And if yours be not a hope that will put you upon striving and labouring, it is a dead hope, a useless hope; and such as can contribute nothing to your salvation. And so I have done with those directions that are requisite as to the former sort, the unregenerate and unconverted; the next will respect the other sort, and their case, to wit, that of converts, so as to influence their perseverance unto salvation

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SERMON XXV.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THE order of discourse upon this subject hath brought me now at length to say somewhat, by way of direction, to those, who, being regenerate, and turned to God, are on their way towards him. That the principle of hope, which doth more especially belong to their regenerate state, may be improved by them, to their cheerful and more comfortable progress through the whole of their course and way to their end. We having spoken by way of direction to a former sort, and to a former case, to wit, to direct how hope may be improved, in order to conversion and regeneration itself: nor am I solicitous, that the course I have taken upon this subject hath obliged me to be long upon it; for I both consider the great importance of the subject, which I cannot but know, as you, any of you, may, and must, when you seriously bethink yourselves of it. And also, I know not that any have purposely and designedly treated upon this subject; that is, to show the necessary influence of hope upon the whole business of a Christian's life, from first to last, from the beginning of it till it end in eternal life.

I shall repeat nothing of what hath been said by way of direction, in reference to the former case, to wit, to persons yet unregenerate, what improvement is to be made of hope in order to their regeneration, and their being born of God; to which nothing is more plain, than that it would never be, but as even then they begin to have hope God-ward. But my present and remaining business is to show the continual influence that hope may be improved unto for a Christian's progress, to help on those that are regenerate, and born to God, in their way to him. That so, upon the whole matter, you may see the new creature, it is from first to last a creature (as it were) made up of hope; its very make and constitution are suited to the state which it is successively made for. In this present state, while its great supports do lie in unseen and expected good things, there cannot but be a continual exercise of hope necessary from first to last; but in the other state, hope naturally turns into joy; when the things that were before matter of expectation, are now come to be the matter of actual fruition. In the mean time, its make and frame suit it to the present state of its case. That whereas, such as were before strangers and aliens to God, in a state of apostacy from him, they begin to be prompted and stirred up to look after God; as soon as any such instinct is put into them, it is put into them in a way of hope.

God hath a design in hand to restore and recover apostate creatures; saith the soul, I own myself to be such a one; I am miserable, and lost for ever, if I do not return to God, and if God accept me not. I have hope I shall: I have hope he will. And so the soul is (as it were) begotten to God, even by the power of hope; and being reconciled, the great remaining expectation is, of being saved, of being brought to a safe and happy state at last. Hope runs through the course of such a converted, regenerate soul, even to the attainment of its end, which is actual salvation.

And whereas the Gospel is the great and stated means by which souls are both begotten unto God, and enabled to adhere and cleave to him, even to the end; where that Gospel hath long been, there is great reason to think that God hath much such work to do; many such blessed effects to bring about upon souls; and that much such work is done: that with us, God hath touched many souls, turned many hearts, implanted that new and divine principle in many, that will certainly end at last in eternal life. It is not to be thought (or at least one would be very loth to think or imagine such a thing) that a bright and blissful heaven should have been opened among us, so long, so continually, by the Gospel, whose design it is to bring life and immortality to light, that we, amidst all the impurities, and darkness, and wretchedness, of this our present state, should have such a glorious prospect given us, and set before our eyes; heaven opened in all the glories of it; (as in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ it is;) and that we, after all this, should agree in it as our common sense and sentiment, that it is better always to dwell in this dungeon, so as to have no aspirings, no hope, directed upward, towards that glorious state of things; one would be loth (I say) to admit such an apprehension as this; that this should be our common sentiment, that it is better to dwell in a dungeon always, than amidst all that divine light and glory above, whither we are called, and whereupon the hope of our calling doth finally terminate; yea, and though we know that dungeon is to fall upon us ere it be long, and that they who have affected that dwelling, must certainly be overwhelmed with its ruin. It is meet for us to judge that there are sundry, whose souls God hath, by the power of his Gospel animated by his Spirit, possessed with another sense.

And if there be many such, or any such, that are looking higher, that have their expectations and hopes placed upon some other sorts of things, things of a higher excellency and value than this lower creation can afford; the greatest care imaginable then must be had, that their hope be kept alive in strength and vigour; if it fail, if it should languish, if it were possible it should, and it were ever so certain, that it should never expire and fail; yet means must be used, that it may not; but (I say) if it should fail, (and the dread ought to be upon our spirits, that it may not fail, that it may never fail,) then are such poor creatures ingulfed again, sunk in, and swallowed up by the spirit of this world; and so exposed, and left to be involved with it in its fearful ruin. That it may not be so, and because it shall not be so with those that do peculiarly belong to God, and are the children of the kingdom, begotten to the eternal heavenly inheritance, all endeavours must be used that hope may be preserved and kept alive in them. And in order to it, pray take these following directions.

Direction 1. See that your spirits be deeply and seriously engaged, and taken up in the meditation of that glorious state of things which you profess finally to hope for, and which you expect should be your eternal state. See (I say) that your spirits be deeply exercised in the meditation of that glorious state of things. The way to keep hope alive, is to keep its glorious, blessed object in view. The hope of the greatest things imaginable can never live, or be influential in any of us, if we do not preserve the remembrance, and have not the actual thoughts of them. If there be such a thing as the habit of hope yet left, it will be a languishing thing, and afford us no support: it will be as dead within us, if we have not frequent views of that glorious object of it; if we do not look towards that object, take it in its comprehension, and compass even the whole state of things, that we expect and hope for as our final and eternal state.

* Preached October, 18th, 1691.

I pray, let us labour, not only to realize but to familiarize to ourselves the unseen world. It is a shame that we should be called Christians, and that our thoughts should be taken up chiefly, and principally, about things that are seen. Christian hope lies beyond and above those things; we forfeit our names while we confine our thoughts so much to that which is present and sensible. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, as Christians, we make ourselves the most miserable of creatures; we are made up of contradictions, we are in a continual war with ourselves, we do not act and carry so consistently with ourselves as other men do, who do not pretend to Christianity; we are more miserable than they.

And, that I may the more fruitfully enlarge upon this, as that without our hope is a languid and insignificant thing, and in a direct way to be reduced to nothing; let me desire you to give compass and scope to your thoughts about the invisible world, and the expected state of things, which is to be the great and final object of your hope. The context, which hath so immediate reference thereunto, would afford you very great help for the managing and directing your thoughts in the contemplation of the invisible state. You see it is spoken of a little before the text, under the notion of glory; a glorious state, a state of glory. "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us," verse 18. And that glory is spoken of under the notion of an inheritance. They that are the regenerate sons of God, and now actually under the government of the Divine Spirit which begot them unto God; they that are so children, are also heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," verse 17. "That after having suffered awhile with him, they may be also glorified together with him." As to the invisible world, (that happy part of it, where "the heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," have their eternal concernments lying,) that happy part of it is to be looked upon as a region of glory, all glory. And that you may give latitude and scope to your thoughts about this, which is the very hope of your calling, the final hope of it, I pray consider such things as these more particularly concerning it. Considerations to enforce this first direction.

1. Contemplate the vast amplitude of that glorious region, where you (if you be regenerate, and born of God, and heirs of the celestial kingdom) are to have your everlasting abode. Think (I say) seriously and often of the vast amplitude of it, that you may give scope and room to your thoughts; it is mean to be confined in our apprehensions of things to this little spot of our earth, wherein we breathe; think if you were ascending from it, if you were ascended but a little way, into how vastly larger and more spacious and roomy a region do you come but by a little ascent! but if you were ascended as high as our vortex, as the utmost confines of this vortex of ours, to which this earth, and the sun, and the moon, and other planets do belong; how inconsiderable a point is all this earth, in comparison of that vortex to which all these do belong? But if you were beyond that, beyond that circuit and those confines within which all this planetary region is limited; then how vastly spacious are all the supernal heavens above the regions in which the sun, and moon, and other planets, do move! So as we are even lost in the thoughts whither we should then go: and it is pleasant to be so lost.

And to consider how despicable a nothing this earth of ours is in comparison; so as it may be lost, it may be consumed, and burnt up, and that it is an insignificant thing to the universe; no more than the burning of one single little cottage would be in a vast empire, containing two hundred and twenty-seven provinces as Ahasuerus's did; one that is an heir of heaven, and of the inheritance of the saints in light, when he thinks of the burning of this world, may say, What is it to me? my concernments lie not here, it is a despicable, inconsiderable trifle; it is no more loss to the creation and no more loss to me, than the dropping of a hair, one single hair. Labour to aggrandize to yourselves so much as this comes to, of the object of your hope; to wit, to consider the vast amplitude of the region of glory; we must think with ourselves, that as to what doth more subside in this creation is baser and meaner fitter for baser and meaner inhabitants; it is but a very little, inconsiderable part, incomparison of the ample and spacious regions of the incircling heavens above, that seem all appropriated to the heirs of the eternal kingdom. And then,

2. When you are laying before your eyes the object of your hope, that that may be lively and strong in you; consider too the numerous multitude of the inhabitants of those glorious regions, or, to speak collectively, of that region of glory. It is true, in this little inconsiderable world of ours, we find the inhabitants are generally very numerous; (as there will be more occasion to speak bye and bye;) but, alas, what is this little perishable thing, (this world of ours,) to the universe? And it is a very unreasonable foolish thought to think the nobler parts of the creation of God to be less destitute of inhabitants than our earth is. Do but turn up a clod of earth, and you see every little clod inhabited with somewhat or other that hath life in it, little insects and *animalcula* that have life in them. It is a foolish thought to think that the nobler parts of the creation of God should be less full of inhabitants, though still meaner the nearer this earth; but if you ascend higher, you are to suppose all filled with living inhabitants; and (as we have reason to apprehend) with creatures innocent and upright with God, angel-like creatures.

It is true many angels fell, many, if you consider them abstractedly; but take them comparatively, and we have no reason to think but that they were a very small part of the host of heaven, in comparison with them that stood, and retained their integrity; and if the upper regions be replenished with innocent creatures, full of the love of God, and of the knowledge of God, and who stand in absolute devotedness to him; then you must consider the blessed society, the society of the blessed, to be a most numerous thing. The innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of men made perfect; so that the angels that have fallen, and the apostate sons of men that shall not be recovered, and that finally persist in enmity against all the methods of reconciliation, though they will be numerous, yet a little inconsiderable number they must be, in comparison of all those glorious creatures that inhabit the more noble parts of God's creation: and it would make a man's hope revive, and spring, and flourish mightily in him, to think of being ere long one of that vast and numerous assembly, that blessed glorious assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. And,

3. Consider, again, the high and admirable perfection of these blessed creatures, of whom you are to be one; their bodily perfections, (which are not nothing,) and their mental spiritual perfections, which are incomparably more, are to be considered. As to the former, the words immediately foregoing the text, do directly cast back our thoughts upon them, upon those perfections that are more properly corporeal, and that belong to the body: not only they, (that is, the rest of the creation,) but ourselves also, which have received the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting (which carries hope in it as you do well know) for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies; for we are saved by hope. We that now dwell in these bodies so cumbersome, so tiresome, that are such an annoyance to us, and so great a depression to us; we are hoping, hoping for a time and state of things when these bodies are to have an entire, complete redemption from every thing which is gravanimous and burthensome to them, and by which they are gravanimous to our spirits, to ourselves; and it is by the hope of this, that we are saved. Here we are depressed and sunk very low; these bodies are prisons and dungeons to us; they are so, but we are saved by that hope of the day of our redemption; the redemption of our bodies, which is also the day of our adoption, or solemn adoption.

I have told you upon this occasion formerly, of a double adoption among the Romans, private and public. It is the public adoption that is here referred to. In the private, every good soul is adopted when it is regenerate; but the public adoption, or the manifestation of the sons of God, (as it is afterwards called,) it is referred unto that day when all are to be visibly invested with their glorious bodies, conformed to the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To have such an agility of body as that it shall never be a clog; such refined spirits that will never cloud our thoughts, that will never obstruct the notions of the soul. And that shall be, with respect of aptitude to speedy motion, so little cumbersome, that, as Austin's celebrated expression is, *ubi voluerit animus, ibi protinus erit corpus;* wheresoever the mind wills or wishes to be, there the body shall be in a moment. Its motions, and (for ought we know) its texture, (as that of the sun-beams,) gliding as quick as a thought, this way or that; and (for ought we know) as fine; it being very easy to make the grossest earth as fine as the purest ether, to him that made all things out of nothing; and since chemistry performs a great deal this way by human art, much more may divine.

So as that these bodies that we are afterwards to inhabit, are said to be from heaven, the terrestrial to be all gone; for in this we groan, "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house that is from heaven," 2 Cor. v. 2. All of a piece with heaven, contempered unto heaven, the earthly house of this tabernacle, changed into such a one.

2. And it is very material, and seems to be glanced at in that which is said by our Saviour; "The righteous shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father," Matt. xiii. 43. The sun in the firmament is (as it were) the resemblance of a glorified body, and how near it may be of the same materials we cannot tell, all our earth being refined into so pure and celestial a matter. And,

3. And then, if you consider again the spiritual and mental perfections (which is incomparably a great thing) of the happy members of this glorious, blessed, numerous society. There you must understand his knowledge in perfection, his holiness in perfection, and his love in perfection. It cannot be expected that in this subject, I could stay to dilate upon every one; but it is a great thing to think of the matter of our own hope in this: I hope to be one of them, I hope to be such a creature, inhabiting such a mind, in such a body, to be one of those *Isangeloi*, (as they are called,) angel's fellows, equal to the angels of God: Oh! that we should have such things as these in view, and obvious to our thoughts, and yet have no thoughts about them, or few thoughts about them! Live with minds (as it were) confined to this earth, and continually grovelling in the dust of it! This is mean, this is dishonourable to our Father, who hath begotten us to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance; and it is most injurious to ourselves. To think that I shall have a mind, a spirit, ere it be long, (as mean and abject a thing as I now am,) all (as it were) composed and made up of knowledge, and of purity, and of love; what a glorious thing is that! And that I shall have a spirit inhabiting a body, (since I was made to join with a body,) that shall be no hinderance, no burthensome thing to me, no tedious, irksome companion to all eternity. And again,

4. Consider about this state, the universal harmony that must hereupon be in all this glorious, blessed society, as vastly numerous and extensive as it is through the spacious heavens, those regions of light and bliss; come wherever one will, the same order universally obtaining every where; all animated by one and the same spirit; for they "that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," Gal. vi. 8. That immense almighty Spirit (as the living creature in the wheels) acting in every mind, be they ever so numerous, and never so vastly extended through the regions of light and bliss; all everlastingly under the dominion of the same blessed, almighty, and omnipresent Spirit; so that there is here among them, wheresoever they be, not one dissentient thought; all have the same sentiment, the same mind, the same inclination, and all centre in one and the same design: no jarring, no disagreement, no darkness, no obscurity, no error, much more no animosity, having the least place in any member of that glorious society. And again,

5. Consider the glorious visible residence of our great Redeemer among them, who can render himself every where present, and every where appearing in conspicuous glory. How grateful and entertaining a thought must that be to them, who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, that they are to be for ever with the Lord, when that happy season comes, that the Lord descends with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ are first raised and caught up into the clouds, and do meet their Redeemer in the air, then are they ever with the Lord, (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.) never out of his company, though their company be so vastly numerous and great; for he is the head of all principalities and powers, the head of all things to the church; and yet he must be every where present to every one, for they are all to be ever with the Lord. And when so much is plainly enough expressed and declared to us, we need never trouble ourselves to think how it shall be; he that we know to have done so great things already, can easily add to this all the rest; make himself present to those vastly numerous, innumerable myriads of glorious creatures, that do every where delight in his presence, and cannot but externally do so.

And to this also, the context here refers us, still leading us to the final object of our hope; they are to be the heirs of the eternal glory, as their inheritance; they are to be "joint heirs with Christ," they are to inherit with Christ, "and, after having suffered with him, are to be glorified together with him," verse 17; after we have suffered awhile; he and we having been suffering together, he and we shall be glorified together. And to the same purpose is that admirable contexture of discourse, 2 Cor. v. from the beginning of the chapter to the 8th verse; but I cannot stay to run it over with you. Take notice, I pray you, what you find there, in that 8th verse; we are confident, (saith he,) and willing rather to be absent from the body, (this terrestrial body,) not any body at all not altogether to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon; this terrestrial body being reformed, refined, clarified into another thing: for that body we are now in, this terrestrial body, we covet rather to be absent from it, and to be present with the Lord. According to that, Phil. i. 23. I desire rather to be "dissolved and be with Christ, which is far better." We are to be in his presence, and to have him present among us, as soon as we are loose from this base, mean thing, this vile body that we are now linked and clogged with. And the expressions are very observable, that are used in the mentioned place, 2 Cor. v. The words used, signify to be peopled with, or unpeopled or dispeopled from. The expression of being present with the Lord, do[illegible] intimate the Lord our blessed Redeemer to be the head, the president of that dispeopled sort of people, whose dwelling is not with flesh; they do not inhabit and dwell [illegible] such bodies as those are, in which we now dwell; and [illegible] long (saith he) to be dispeopled from this bodily so[illegible] of people; and to be taken into the communion of that people that dwell out of such bodies with the Lord; to be peopled with that people, of which he is the immediate, visible, glorious head; there I long to be. I would fain be absent from this body. I desire it rather, I choose it as a more desirable thing, to be dispeopled from this bodied sort of people; and to be peopled with them, to make one amongst them, who do people the glorious regions above, which are peopled with another sort of inhabitants, and with them do I covet and hope to dwell, and long to dwell. And then,

6. Consider too the Divine presence universally replenishing all, for in that everlasting state God is himself to be immediately all in all; and so all to be universally transformed into the image of that bright glory, which shines upon them from his blessed face, and all to inhabit that one and the same Divine presence, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are "pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. last verse. Oh! for such mean creatures as we, to have such a thing in hope, to make one in that glorious, celestial community, among whom, the blessed eternal God shall, by immediate communication, be all in all to every one! Every soul as full of God as it can hold, and be made capable of beholding unspeakably more, than we can now so much as conceive of; for the design is in our present state, (and very much by the influence of hope,) here to have us refining, and be made more capacious and larger vessels of glory. They that are to be vessels of mercy first, are to be vessels of glory afterwards; here they are to be gradually greatened and enlarged, (and very much by the influence of hope,) in order to their being more receptive vessels, that they may hold more, and be capable of larger and fuller communications from that immense fulness, that filleth all in all. And hereupon,

7. Consider the high satisfaction that every one of those

blessed creatures must have in himself, for there is to be a glory revealed in us (as a little above the text.) The context is full of accounts of the final object of our hopes, and gives us frequent occasion to consider what it imports, and carries with it; "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Every one of these glorious creatures is to be glorious within. As it is said of the king's daughter, the spouse of Christ, "She is all glorious within," Psalm xlv. "She will be perfectly so; for he gave himself for his church, to sanctify it and to cleanse it, and to present it a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," Ephes. v. 25, 26, 27. And sanctification is implied to be the very beginning of that glory, the foundation of it. That glory consists in perfect sanctification. He gave himself for it, to sanctify and make it a glorious church; every one of it is then a glorious creature, and eternally glorious, by glory revealed in the Divine image shining in him, in perfect and consummate glory. That image which stands all in knowledge, and holiness, in the greatest amiableness, loveliness, and love that is possible.

How infinitely satisfying must such a one's own frame, and the complexion and temper of his own mind, be to himself, when, through a boundless and immense eternity, one shall never have occasion to reflect upon one disorderly thought, or say I wish that thought had never been thought; never have occasion to reflect upon one irregular wish! Oh! the holy order and rectitude that will be within, when every faculty and every power shall be under the dominion of that Almighty Spirit of Divine light and grace; when it shall be as impossible to be the author of one wrong or misplaced thought, as it would be to any of us to be the author of another world, of a world that should be excentrical to this! What a satisfaction is this, and must be, when a person shall so everlastingly agree with himself, as to have no war within him, nothing of reluctation, nothing of contrariety, against what he knows to be equal, and congruous, and fit, and comely: but every thing just as it should be. And then, thereupon,

8. The mighty complacency that such must take in one another; the everlasting complacencies that they must take in one another, when they are all alike, not equal; it is plain enough there will be different orders; but all alike, all of one mind, all of one sentiment, all conspiring in one and the same design. And then consider,

9. The pleasantness of their perpetual work, wherein they are all to be united; to wit, joyful and everlasting adoration: every one pleased with another, upon this account that he knows him to be pleased with exalting God and the Lamb, for ever and ever; when every one knows his fellow to have the same pleasure that he hath in prostration, in falling down before the throne, in ascribing all praise, and dominion, and glory, to him that lives for ever and ever; the eternal Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit. When the comeliness and equity of the thing recommends itself so fully to every mind, and all agree in one sense, "Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive blessing, and power, and dominion, for ever and ever," and all say Amen, all proclaim their joyful amen. The vast and spacious heavens continually resounding with this sort of melody, all giving their joyful, grateful amens, to one and the same thing. And this eternity goes on, never wearisome, never grievous; because all this employment, and the exercise, is so suitable to the complexion of every one's mind, none can ever disagree to it, and all things do conspire and concur to make these associates in bliss, and glory, and adoration the most grateful company to one another. We experience something what pleasure and sweetness there is in conversing with such as are wise, and learned, and good, when these things are in conjunction; but when they are in perfection, in absolute perfection, oh, the pleasure that will be taken in being associated with such ones! Lastly,

10. The perfect assurances that all have of the perpetuity of their state, and that there shall never be an end of it. "The light afflictions that are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" it can never lose its weight; there will be no detraction, no diminution from it, to eternity. Therefore there is an impossibility, an utter impossibility, that ever there should be a cessation.

And that is one direction to this purpose, to keep alive this hope, contemplate much, and as distinctly, and with as clear and formed thoughts as you can, the glorious object of it, the final and eternal state; and be ashamed of having such things in view, and of having so few, so unfrequent, and dull, and sluggish thoughts about such things.

SERMON XXVI.*

Rom. vii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

But now go on with the further directions that are to be given for the mentioned end.

Direction 2. That we compare with that expected heavenly state the present state wherein we are; and with the blessedness of the one, the wretchedness of the other. For if there be any ground for a better hope, there is nothing more likely to awaken it, (supposing we have such a ground before our eyes,) than to have our spirits effectually stung with the sense of the present evils wherewith we are beset, and with which we are continually infested. If we like our present state well, there is no place for hope, no room for it, or if it can have any place, it can have no effect; it will be a very faint, languishing hope, that we shall have for another state, if we are very well pleased with that wherein we are already; and therefore, as to our present state, we should bethink ourselves, and consider, whether, having such a future one in view as hath been represented already, as the ultimate, final object of our hope, we have reason to take up with that wherein we already are.

And this we are manifestly led to by the context, which, when the text tells us, "We are saved by hope," doth conjunctly tell us, what the present state of our case is, in a two-fold respect; in respect of this world, in which we live; and in respect of these bodies, to which we are now confined. The former whereof draws our thoughts to consider the remoter evils which do beset us; and the latter, those nearer and more pressing evils which are closely and continually urgent upon us

1. In reference to the state of this world, can we think it a covetable thing, long to continue in such a world as this, when we have any ground in view, of a better hope, or the object of a better, represented to us? See how the state of the world is represented in what goes before, and which the text refers unto, that is, the creature (this inferior creation it must mean) is all subjected unto vanity, and is all groaning under the bondage of corruption, and travailing in pain together, until now. This being the case in this respect, saith the apostle, "We are saved by hope." We are here ingulfed in a world of miseries and sorrows; and all things round about, they are (as it were) in one degree or another, under a pressure and languor; do not we behold the creation drooping? This lower world in which we are, may be seen (as it were) hanging the head, that a languishment is upon all things, the shadow of death hovering over all in every part, and yet subjected unto this state in hope; hope being in reference to the inanimate or irrational part to be understood but objectively. It is subjected to this state of things, but in hope; there being a prospect that it shall be redeemed, shall be recovered, so as to partake of the glorious liberty of the sons of God, whose manifestation doth approach. Now, when all this world is hoping for a better state of things, shall not we hope? We that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, as it afterwards follows: or what? is impurity, misery, and wretchedness, become so much our element, that we are content to live still there, whilst all things are (as it were) expressing a sense round about us, groaning and travailing; and we pleased, we only pleased, to remain in such a state as this is? But to look upon the state of things in this world more particularly,

* Preached October 28th, 1691.

(1.) We find it replenished with inhabitants, over whom Satan hath universal dominion; he is called the god of this world, (the usurping god of it,) the "spirit that works in the hearts of the children of disobedience," 2 Cor. iv. 6. and Eph. ii. beginning; as you know the Scripture speaks in those places I refer unto. This is that which puts the world into paroxysms every where; it is under the power of the great destroyer, the Abaddon, the Apollyon, he whose business it is to destroy, to tear all to pieces, as much as in him is. And hence, by consequence,

(2.) We find this world to be replenished with inhabitants full of atheism, and enmity against their Sovereign, and rightful Lord. All affecting to be without God in the world. And,

(3.) They are full of all unrighteousness, malignity, deceit, envy, wrath, as experience shows, from age to age, and from generation to generation; and never more than in this age. A world replenished with inhabitants, that are tearing one another to pieces every where, as they can have opportunity; such an account as is given of the inhabitants of this world, (Rom. i. latter end,) how exactly doth it suit the present state of things? and indeed, the ordinary state, more or less, in all times and ages! And again,

(4.) They are still more liable to disturbance from it, who would have least to do with it; to wit, those that are most intent upon wickedness, every where are most mischievous to them who have any savour or impression of goodness upon them, so that it is to them that are such a very hell. It is to themselves very much their own element. The world is such as they make it themselves, and in very great part affect to have it; but to them that have received an impression from above, and are begotten with a principle that suited them to be inhabitants of another world, it is of all others most troublesome, mischievous, and disquieting to them; and therefore, they of all others have much the more reason to be weary of it, and to cherish the hope (when they have any ground for it) of being in a better state, a better world, ere it be long. And if we lastly consider,

(5.) The dreadful ruin that will befal this world, in the tract of time, and before a perfectly good state can obtain or have any place; how much soever things may be better in the mean time; yet there is a universal ruin to be before there can be a perfect and thorough restoration. And the world is groaning, and travailing in pangs, and will be more or less so, even to that end, that consummation of things, that day, when all is to be (as it were) purged with fire, "and pass away with a great noise." "When the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll, (these lower heavens,) and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth, with all things therein, be consumed and burnt up," 2 Peter iii. Notwithstanding all such ruin, we look "for a new heavens and a new earth;" according to God's own promise, we look for new heavens, and a new earth, a new universe (as it were) composed and made up of heaven and earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell. Now the wretched state of things, in the mean time, should mightily sublimate, and heighten, and invigorate the hope of that glorious state, that is to be expected afterwards. And then, if we consider,

2. The nearer and more closely pressing evils that are upon us, as we are in such bodies as these we do now inhabit and dwell in, even that should mightily enliven hope, and put it upon a more vigorous exercise, for those are the evils that we are stung with continually; and to these we find there is a more immediate reference, in what goes before the text, not only they, (the rest of the creation which are, by an elegant rhetorical *prosopopeia*, represented as having sense, and having hope; a sense of the present evils, and a hope of a better state, not only they,) "but we ourselves also, (verse 23.) who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of our bodies; for we are saved by hope." These are the next following words: not only they, not the rest of the creation only; but we ourselves also, (much more, it must be understood,) who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, do groan, waiting for the adoption, that is, the manifestation of the sons of God, mentioned before in the 19th verse, when our adoption shall be declared, when the sons of God shall look like themselves, and like their Father, whereas now they look very unlike him. It is as if the apostle had said, Do you think they shall always dwell so meanly as now they do? No; they are waiting for the adoption. What is that? To wit, the redemption of the body; the time when their bodies shall be redeemed from under all the evils by which they are now, continually, from time to time, infested, and by which they are debased, and made mean, and vile, as they are called "vile bodies," (Phil. iii. 28.) or the bodies of our humiliation. As if he should have said, What? Do you think that the sons of God, when they are manifested, and declared to be his sons, shall dwell so meanly as now they do, in such cottages as these, such vile bodies as these? No; we groan within ourselves, (under the present pressures, while we are in these bodies,) waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of our bodies from under all those evils that make them so mean and inglorious things, and so unsuitable to the state of the sons of God. And if we consider those nearer evils, which partly we suffer in these bodies, that is, whereof they are the immediate subjects, and which partly we suffer by our being in them, they ought to have that pungency with them to our sense, as to awaken hope in us, if there be any such thing, and if we have any ground of it in view.

1. For the former sort of these evils, which we suffer in these bodies, to wit, which they themselves are the immediate subjects of; truly, while we have the prospect of a better state than that, and the hope of it in view, it is mean, and vile, and unworthy, not to have that hope of it live, and be often excited and raised up in us. For what infirm things are these bodies! How much infirmity do they suffer in themselves! How are these earthly tabernacles shattered from day to day? Shaken with agues, burnt with fevers, drowned with dropsies, harrassed and torn in pieces with stones, stranguries, colics, and such kind of painful diseases! Though these are lesser things, they are not nothing. The sons of God are to wait in hope, and with groans, (groans full of hope, not of despair,) for the adoption; that is, the redemption of these bodies; and are in great part to be saved by this hope; it is the hope of a better state even in this respect, which must draw us off from the present bodily state.

What we feel is not enough, if we do not hope too; for though we feel very great grievances and pressures in these bodies, which they themselves are the immediate subjects of; yet, notwithstanding, we are so much naturally in love with this flesh, and this bodily state, that we shall rather endure all this, than change, if we have not a better hope in view; if our souls be not erected and raised up within us, to consider, What! I was not made for an eternal inhabitation in such a body as this; and though I am to be patient of an abode in it, I must not be fond of it; I must endure it, but not take pleasure in it, when I know it belongs to me as an inheritance; and as I am an adopted one, one of God's sons, to be otherwise provided for, in point of habitation, hereafter. "We know, that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and therefore "we groan within ourselves, not to be unclothed, but clothed upon." They are not so much groans of sense, as of hope: though they are excited, and raised by sense at first, they are heightened and improved by hope. If it were not for hope, we should groan like beasts under such a burden; but when we have so great hope in view before us, that doth quite change the nature of these groans, and maketh them, not only rational, but holy ones; groans of men, and groans of saints, to wit, for such a bodily state, or such a state, as to these bodies, as wherein we shall be more capable of serving and enjoying the blessed God for ever, the great object of our worship and hope. But then,

2. For the evils which we suffer by our being in these bodies, they are of a far higher nature than those that we suffer immediately in them, or whereof they are the immediate subjects themselves. How mighty an influence hath the very temper of these bodies upon our minds, to pervert, corrupt, and deprave them, to bring in upon us, and to continue and renew from time to time in us, whatsoever

is most pernicious and prejudicial to the nature, and the proper and the genuine operations of an intelligent, immortal spirit. For,

(1.) It is by our being in these bodies, that our minds are diverted from those noble employments and exercises, wherein we should be continually taken up about higher things; these very bodily senses, which let in divine light and glory upon us, let in vanity, and befool and betray us from day to day; so that we have cause to complain, (as a worthy person whom I knew did,) Oh! how are we deafened by these ears of ours! and how are we blinded by these eyes of ours! that we cannot hear the voice of God calling us to heaven, to his eternal kingdom and glory; that we cannot behold the divine light that shines through all things! How are we, by these very senses of ours, made insensible, may we truly say! To our very tastes, the best and most valuable things are rendered tasteless, and without savour and relish to us. This is what we do immediately owe to these very bodies, and our bodily abode, our being confined for this time to these bodies. And again,

(2.) Not only are our minds diverted, but darkened by an influence from these very bodies, in very great measure, so as that all our apprehension of things, which are of a spiritual and divine nature, they have a terrene tincture upon them; our thoughts are gross, our conceptions are carnal, they smell and savour of the earth in which we dwell, and which makes up our house and habitation for us, encloseth these intelligent, immortal spirits of ours. While it encloses them, it imparts a terrene tincture to them, and makes all our thoughts and conceptions of things gross, earthly, and carnal, like themselves, in which these souls of ours are rather indeed prisoners than inhabitants. And,

(3.) Hence it is also, that our affections become alienated from divine and spiritual things, and in so great a measure, dead to them. The things of this earth we can savour, bodily things we can affect, we can love them, we can desire them, we can delight in them; but things that are of a divine and heavenly nature, towards these we are all dead. A total death passeth, and binds every affection of our souls, till divine grace comes to show what miracles it can work. Saith God, I can make a clod of clay love me, I can put the tincture of heaven even upon earth itself. Till (I say) a divine, almighty power be exerted, every thing that is of a spiritual and heavenly nature will be disaffected perpetually by us. I can taste no sweetness in any such thing, might the poor soul be forced to say, even from its own continual experience, and often renewed trials of itself. They that are after the flesh, will only savour the things of the flesh, and not the things of the Spirit: and it is only the exertion of almighty power, by the Divine Spirit, that gives victory to our spirits, so as that they shall not be always under the dominion of the fleshly principle; where these spirits come to recover their own dominion, where light, and reason, and judgment come to be efficacious, and to have their proper power and government restored.

It is by the influence of the Divine Almighty Spirit, that any are regenerated into this state, otherwise we should be mere compositions of flesh, and nothing else, as is expressed concerning the state of unregenerate men, compared with the state that they are brought into by regeneration. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," (speaking of whole human nature,) it is but flesh; "but that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," John iii. 6. There is nothing in us (as it were) that doth deserve the name of spirit, till such time as the regenerating power of the Divine Spirit comes to be exerted, and put forth in us: that, indeed, will create something in us that is fit to be called spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit:" there is spirit producing, and spirit produced; otherwise, and not till then, a man deserves to be called nothing but a lump of flesh, and so towards things that are spiritual and divine there is no inclination at all. But then,

(4.) There is strong and unitive propension in these souls of ours, and by their abode in this flesh, to those things that are terrene and carnal, of a nature like their own. And that completes the wretchedness of our case, that to all things that are most suitable to us, we are dead; but to those that are most unsuitable, and furthest beneath us, to them only we live, to them we are alive; and it is a miraculous work of Divine power and grace to make it be otherwise with us, while we are in these bodies. This is that which is certainly to be considered by us with the bitterest regret. Have I that affection in my nature, that is capable of being placed upon God, upon heaven, and upon unseen glory? And what? is it drawn down by this bodily abode, and union with this body, to terrene and earthly things? Into what agonies should it put us to think of this? Have I that love in my nature, that is capable of uniting to my highest and best good, and instead of that, doth it only unite me with a clod, with a piece of clay, with this base and impure earth? How unsufferable a thing, how little to be borne by them, who understand themselves, to be born of God! and who, though they are to live awhile in these bodies, yet it is but a life that hovers continually upon the shadow of death, a kind of dying life, they are (as it were) between death and life. Life there is, and that life, if it be, or wherever it is, will commence, will be eternal life at length. But in what a faint image, in the mean time, and in what a continual struggle, so that there is always reason for those outcries, "Oh, wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" That pathetical self-bemoaning of the apostle suits our common case, though we have not that sense of it that he expresseth, Rom. vii. 24.

Now mark the connexion. What we have hinted to us of this sad present state of our case, doth immediately precede here. We are groaning with the rest of a groaning world, that are all in travailing pangs, being subjected in hope unto vanity, and corruption, and bondage. "We also that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit," we are groaning too, with the rest of the world, "waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body," when we shall dwell like the children of God. It is our consideration of the wretchedness of our present case, in these respects, that must awaken hope in us, and make the exercise of it more lively and vigorous: that the being gradually habituated to so low, and mean, and abject a state as this is, may not quite sink us, as it must do, if hope be not kept alive, and maintained in us; a hope, that though things are in these respects very sad and grievous, yet they shall be better; the case shall be mended; we shall be in a better world, and in better bodies than these are; bodies that shall have more favourable influences upon intelligent minds and immortal spirits, or less noxiousness than these bodies have.

That is the second direction; with the representation which we have of the heavenly state, let us consider and inspect the wretchedness of our present state on earth, as we dwell in this lower world, and as we dwell in such bodies as these that we now inhabit. And,

Direction 3. That this hope may be cherished, and kept alive in us, to our actual salvation, let us carefully avoid unsuitable and unscriptural, horrid thoughts of God, upon whom this hope of ours must terminate. Nothing will so depress and stifle this hope, upon the influence whereof so much depends, as to have black, and dark, and horrid thoughts of God, beyond and contrary to what his own representation of himself in his word gives ground for. Now nothing is more natural than,

1. For persons that are yet altogether in their sins, impure creatures throughout, to represent to themselves an impure deity. Nor again,

2. Is there any thing more natural, when souls begin to be a little awakened, and stirred to mind their own concernments, than to entertain and admit thoughts of a horrid and dreadful being, which they put the name of God upon, and which (as they know God is to be the object of their worship) they clothe with such apprehensions of him, as makes their worship savour of nothing else but a kind of dread, that always possesses their spirits, so as that they worship only like slaves; not like the children of God, not like his sons, but as those that are afraid of a tormenting lash perpetually; that are allured by no love, no goodness, no kindness, no apprehension of his love. And nothing doth more directly tend to destroy the hope that should be in us, and whereby we are to live.

And pray do but consider this one passage, "Be not thou a terror to me; thou art my hope in the evil day,"

Jer. xvii. 17. I only note it to show the inconsistency of these two things, God's being a terror to us, and his being our hope. While we make him a terror to ourselves, we cannot make him our hope: the prophet prayeth, "Be not a terror to me," for then my hope in thee is lost, thou art to be my only hope in an evil day. And what will become of me, if he that is to be my hope should be my terror? and if that be a thing so much to be deprecated, that God do not make himself a terror to us, truly it ought to be avoided, our making him a terror to ourselves; and for the same reason; because he is our only hope, and he cannot be our hope, while he is a terror to us. And then,

Direction 4. The next direction will be, that which I hinted at the last time, and I told you upon what occasion, to wit, that we maintain in ourselves a just love to our own souls, and a desire of their salvation. This the series of the discourse naturally leads to; and I have found it necessary to speak very distinctly to it, as having met with bills, once and again, that suggest this case; a fear that all that is done, in a way of obedience, should be from a motive of self-love, and a desire and design of their own salvation; and not so, principally, for the glory of God therein. Now what I shall say of this, will lie under these two general heads.

1. To evince to you, from the ground in the text, ("We are saved by hope,") that there ought and must be in us a principle of self-love, to wit, love to our own souls, maintained, and kept in exercise all along. And,

2. I shall say somewhat to the doubt, and show whether this self-love be the principal mover, yea or no, of hope in these souls; or how they may yet discern that it is not the principal mover. For the

1. That there ought to be such a principle of love to our own souls, that must be exercised in us, through the whole of our course, upon the very ground here expressed in the text, that "We are saved by hope," consider the following things.

(1.) If there be not such a love to our own souls, that shall put us upon this earnest desire and endeavour of their salvation, there can be no hope of it; for there is no hope of that which we desire not. What a man desires not, he cannot hope for; therefore hope with reference to the business of our salvation, would be simply impossible, naturally impossible, if there were no such love to ourselves, or to our own souls, as should make us to desire salvation; for that which we desire not, it is naturally impossible we should hope for. And,

(2.) Supposing such love to ourselves as should make us desire our own salvation were an unlawful thing, it would by consequence make the hope of our salvation an unlawful thing too: and so to say, we are to be saved by hope, were to be saved by a sin, and the whole business of our salvation were to be carried on continually by a continued sin, through the whole of our course; than which, you may easily apprehend, nothing could be imagined or spoken more absurd.

(3.) We are bound to endeavour, in hope, the preservation of the health and life of these bodies: and much more are we to endeavour, in hope, the eternal life and salvation of our souls.

(4.) We should in our whole course (if we should make it our business to suppress such desire and hope as this) counteract the law of our own nature; and we must know the law of our own nature is God's own law: he that is the Author of our nature is the Author of the law of nature; and there is no principle more natural to us than love of ourselves. And,

(5.) We should not only contradict the law of original nature, but we should act against the continual dictates of the new nature, wherein the principle of this self-love is a governing thing. "He that is born of God, keepeth himself, that the evil one toucheth him not," 1 John iii. 18. He loves his own life, is careful for his own life; he keepeth himself, that he may avoid mortal touches from the evil one, who is continually seeking to destroy that precious life, that is now from God himself sprung up in the soul, and in respect whereof he is now said to be born of God. And again,

(6.) It were quite to subvert the whole Gospel constitution, which doth apply itself directly to the principle of self-love in the whole dispensation of it, as supposing that natural to men, and that they should be unnatural, and monstrous towards themselves, if they act not according to it. What mean all the Gospel invitations, and promises, and threatenings, but to apply themselves immediately and directly to the principle of self-love in men, apprehending that they should have some regard to themselves, and to the concernments of their own souls? It supposeth this, when our Lord breathes forth such sweet and alluring invitations as those; "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. latter end. What would that signify, if a man were not to desire rest for his own soul, and life and blessedness for his own soul? "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come and drink of the water of life; incline your ear, and come unto me, hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David," Isaiah lv. 1. What would all this signify, if I were not to take care for, and desire the life of my own soul? And so also all the threatenings of the Gospel were lost upon men, if they were to have no dread of perishing; and no hope, no desire, of being eternally saved. "He that believeth hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." All these were thrown away upon them, who were not to allow themselves, either in a desire or dread, in reference either to the death or life of their souls. But then,

2. To answer the doubt, I will only say these things very briefly to you; that is, whether self-love be the predominant principle, so that any have reason to think all their obedience proceeds from self-love, more than from a desire of God's being glorified in their salvation. Why,

(1.) I would desire such to consider, that the blessedness of heaven doth very principally lie in perfect sinlessness, in being perfectly free from sin. And so, in being as perfectly like God as we are capable: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. That implies perfect sinlessness; consider that in the first place. And,

(2.) Sin is the only thing by which God can be dishonoured. "In breaking the law, dishonourest thou God," Rom. ii. 13. He can be dishonoured by nothing but sin. And,

(3.) Let us consider, do they desire perfect sinlessness? yea or no: and let them deal faithfully with their souls in that particular. Do I desire to be perfectly free from sin? or do I hate every thing of sin, so as to long for nothing more, than perfectly to be free from it? Let their own conscience give an answer to them concerning this, whether they can sincerely say, they do desire nothing so much as perfect freedom from sin; they do desire to be rid of that, by which alone they do dishonour God. And you must know, that sin, in the very nature of it, is more dishonourable to God, than it can be hurtful unto them: it is both dishonourable to God and hurtful to us; but the principal thing is a dishonour to God, as it is against him first. It is against us but secondarily, and in the lowest place. Let them then bethink themselves; Suppose sin did not hurt me, yet do I not hate it, and do not I desire to be perfectly free from it, as a thing that dishonours God, and as it inclines me to dishonour him? And it is an uncreaturely thing, as it is a vile thing, to have that in me which is in opposition and contrariety in its own nature to the best of beings, the most perfect and most excellent of beings. And then,

(4.) That the blessedness of heaven further lies in the soul's entire satisfaction, and acquiescence in God, which is the thing we mean by enjoying him. Fruition is the soul's rest. The blessedness of the heavenly state lies in the soul's perfect rest and acquiescence in God, as the best and most satisfying good. And hereby it is plain, that we honour him the most that we are capable of doing, for if the soul do perfectly rest satisfied in God, as the best and most excellent good, we do thereby voluntarily acknowledge him in the most significant (to wit, in a practical) way, to be (what really he is, as he is God) the best good, the most comprehensive, and the most absolutely perfect good. The soul doth most honour him, in enjoying him,

more than it is capable of doing any other way; for my continual enjoying him, to wit, my continual rest and satisfaction in him, as the best good, is my practical owning him as such. And that is honouring him, when I draw off from all things else, and say, You are not good enough, you have not that excellency in you that is suited to the nature, excellency, and capacity of my soul. Then you betake yourself to God, and there you eternally acquiesce, and take up your satisfaction and rest. This is to confess, actually and practically, that he is all that, which all the creation besides is infinitely short of to you. And so to do, is to glorify and honour him, the most that you are capable of as creatures. In our enjoying him, we glorify him most. And then, lastly,

(5.) As that which is so clear and sure (as I think) to put all out of doubt, if any can say that they hate sin, as the worst of all evils that can exist, or be in being; and do love God as the best of all good, as can also exist, and be in being; this hatred of sin as the worst evil, and this love of God as the best and highest good must proceed from the operation of his own Spirit; none could ever hate sin as the worst of evils, and love God as the best of goods, but by the peculiar operation of the Holy Ghost. Now if the Holy Ghost does produce these great effects in any, you may be sure he can do God no wrong in these productions of his: he governs his own productions equally. The Spirit of God can never be the author of any one's doing God wrong. That you should desire a good for yourself, more than for glory to him, when such operations in you, as hatred of sin, and love of God, do proceed from his own Spirit, that Spirit will never be the author of irregular motions, so as that you should desire your own felicity more than the glory of God.

And, therefore, though these things lie mixed in you, there is love to God, and love to yourselves: and there ought to be both, but you cannot tell which is predominant, by an immediate inspection and view of the effects; look to your cause, and these effects could proceed from no other cause, but the operation of the Divine Spirit; that is, you could never hate sin, but from the Spirit of God. You find that you do hate it, but you do not know whether it be because it is most dishonourable to God, or because it is hurtful to you: yet, I say, your hatred of it proceeds from the Spirit of God. And again, you do love God, but so love yourselves, and your own salvation, that you have one interest in the matter: you love him, in order to your enjoyment of him; you love him, in order to your fruition of him, which is a good to yourselves, and so it ought to be. But you know not which desire is more predominant, which you desire or covet more, that you may be happy, or God be glorified, in your fruition of him; I say, this supreme love to God is not the work of your own spirit, you could not love God above all, (if it were even for your own enjoyment of him only,) but by the help of his Spirit. And the Spirit of God, when that is immediately at work, will be sure to do right between him and you. It will not let you love yourselves more than God, when that love is the immediate production of that Spirit, living and acting in you. And we can be surer of nothing than we are of this, that there can be no hatred of sin, as the worst of evils, nor love of God as the best of goods, but from the Divine Spirit. And if it be from a Divine Spirit, that Spirit will not be the author of so irregular a motion in us, that we should design ourselves, more than him, in these things. And so much I take to be exceeding clear and plain, in reference to this doubt; and it is very unreasonable that any should trouble themselves much about it, but fall admiring and blessing God, that hath made them hate sin as the worst of evils, and a thing by which he is dishonoured; and to love God as the best good, which is as inseparable from the eternal enjoyment of him, as that enjoyment is from their eternal adoring and glorifying of him in that state. There are many other directions remaining, but no more at present.

SERMON XXVII.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

Now to go on, the next direction to be given is,

Direction 5. Ponder well and thoroughly the capacities of your own natures. I know not what should do more to raise and cherish this hope in you, of which the text speaks, for you have been told it doth not speak of hope, as hope; to wit, all hope. There is a hope (as was said) that is so far from saving men, that it destroys them. There are many that are ruined, and not saved, by their hope; but it is the truly Christian hope terminating to the last end of it, in a glorious eternity, that we are to be saved by; that which is truly the hope of salvation, and which is spoken of under the notion of a helmet, the seat of counsel and design; and it is impossible there can be any design for salvation without hope; or indeed any design at all, whereof there is no hope; and therefore I say, in order to the heightening and improving of this hope, the truly Christian hope, it is of the greatest necessity and use imaginable, to study much the capacity of our own natures; to wit, often to recount with ourselves, What is such a creature as I, a human creature, capable of? What are the limits and bounds of my capacity, the capacity of my nature?

Nothing will be plainer, (if it be considered,) than that our natures are capable of greater and more enduring things, than ordinarily we employ our minds about. The usual exercise of our minds is far from reaching the capacity of our natures: from any body that allows himself to think, this acknowledgment will be extorted, at the first sight or hearing, that spiritual things are greater, more excellent, and more noble, than earthly and carnal things are. And do not we find there is a capacity in our natures of conversing with such things? Are our natures capable of conversing with nothing but earth and clay? Can they look no higher? Can we form no notions of objects of a more noble and excellent kind?

And they are capable of more enduring things than we employ them about, that is, of eternal things; nay, so far it is from us to be incapable of having any thought of eternal things, that if we could impose upon ourselves, we cannot possibly avoid that thought; our minds will run into an endless and eternal scheme, do we what we can; that is, we cannot so much as by a thought fix to ourselves any utmost bounds, or periods of things; and therefore, our minds do naturally run into eternity. And more than that, we are not only capable of knowing much of spiritual and eternal things, things that are more noble and excellent in their kind, and more lasting in duration, than the things are which we commonly employ them about.

But we are capable of understanding this higher and larger capacity; we are secretly conscious to ourselves, that there is nothing terrene and temporary, that can measure the capacity of our nature, and fill up, and correspond to it; every man is conscious to himself of this, that allows himself to think; we are not only capable of knowing that there are spiritual things above the sphere of sense, and eternal things above the bounds and limits of time; but we are capable of knowing that we know it; to wit, we are conscious to ourselves of the greater and larger capacity of our natures.

And that being supposed, truly it must be said of us, we know too much to enjoy no more. If we are not to hope for more, we know too much: we know that there is a glorious sphere of spiritual objects, that lie above the reach of our sense; we know there is an eternal state beyond the bounds and limits of time; and knowing this, we know too much, if we are not to hope for more. And if that indeed were the state of our case, that we are to hope for no more than what lies within the compass of our present state, it might make a mere philosopher to curse his nature, that ever it should be capable of prospect, that ever I was a creature capable of prospect, and yet so doomed and con-

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fined to the strait and narrow bounds of this base earth as to have nothing to enjoy, higher and greater than this can afford me. Study the capacity of your nature, and think with yourselves, this immortal mind and spirit that I have in me, is it to be supposed it could have been put into me only to sustain a mean, vile flesh, that after the greatest and utmost care, must at length rot in the dust? Had I a reasonable immortal soul put into me, only to enable me to eat and drink, to please and indulge sense? A brute is furnished for such purposes as these, as well as I.—What did I need a mind, an intelligent mind, an immortal mind, for such purposes as these?

A man may confirm it himself, that he is not in a dream about the larger capacity of his own nature; for when he finds he hath in him a mind, is that a dream? Do not I know I can know? Do not I understand that I can understand? and that I have that in me that can think? And I beseech you, what proportion is there between a thought and a clod of clay? between a mind, and a piece of earth? That the capacity of this mind should be filled up with any earthly thing, what proportion is there in that?

And then, that this mind of mine must be an immortal thing, and so exist in an eternal state; I cannot be in a dream about this; for I beseech you, what proportion is there between a thought and death? Is it a likely thing, that a thing that can think can die? If I have that in me that can think, I have that in me that cannot die.

And then, reckon it unworthy to hope beneath the capacity of your nature; to let your ordinary hope, the hope that is to live in you, and guide your course, to let that (I say) sink beneath the capacity of your nature. And again,

Direction 6. Consider much the large and immense goodness and benignity of the Divine nature; and do not think it agreeable to that, (as it is certain it cannot be,) that there should be such a sort of creatures endowed with a spiritual, immortal mind, that should not be accommodated and suited with proportionable objects. Consider the goodness of God to this purpose, as it appears in other instances. You see that all other sorts of creatures he doth accommodate with suitable objects. Look to yourselves, consider his goodness to you in other respects all your time hitherto. He is that God (as good Jacob when dying said) "that hath fed me all my life;" through him you were born, and through him you have lived; did he give you the appetite of meat and drink, and hath he not given you meat and drink too? If he hath given you faculties in your inferior nature, he hath assigned you their particular suitable objects. And do you think that if he hath given you also rational and immortal minds, it could stand with so vast goodness, not to suit them with proportionable objects too? Is that like his other methods? When the whole earth is full of his goodness, this region, this seat of apostacy and wickedness, all the creatures looking up to him with craving eyes, and he satisfies them all: therefore it cannot be on his part that ever there should be such a flaw, such a defect, in the order of things in his creation, that he should have made an intelligent immortal mind and spirit, and never have provided for it a suitable good, that may answer the capacity of his nature; and you already know, that there is no terrene or temporary thing, that is a suitable good to it.

And thence it cannot but be, (for the matter must not be refunded upon the Creator,) I say, it cannot but be, that if souls be miserable, it must be by themselves; their aversion from God, their refusal to return to him, their resistance of the methods he hath used for the gathering back of wandering souls: they will not return, they love earth and vanity more; and if this, indeed, be the habitual temper of any soul under that Gospel, which is designed on purpose for recovering and reducing souls unto God, and this disaffection of theirs cannot be overcome, this is the highest provocation that can be given to goodness itself; and goodness itself must most highly justify and gratify itself in the ruin of those souls, who have had the offers made them of a suitable correspondent good, but lived all their days while here in the flesh, in the refusal, and contempt, and defiance of these offers. And again,

Direction 7. Consider the confirmation that God hath so expressly given of his special good-will to his own, besides what may be collected of his common goodness towards the generality of his creatures; think how he has confirmed to them, that are become peculiarly his, his peculiar kindness and favour, and their right and title to that heavenly inheritance which they are finally to hope for: he hath sundry ways confirmed it to them.

1. By their regeneration; by which he hath in a great measure cured (to wit, in a prevalent degree) the depravity of their sensualized nature. And even in the work of regenerating them, begotten them to this very hope, or to the hope of this very state. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope," 1 Pet. i. 3. To what living hope, or the living hope of what? Why, "of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, reserved in heaven for us." It is true, you had a capacity in your natures, of higher and greater things than this earth affords; but what signified a mere natural capacity, that was overwhelmed with vicious inclinations, when there was a capacity of greater things, but no habitude? But now there is a gracious habitude in the work of regeneration, added to the natural capacity which repairs the natural powers to those exercises, which that capacity comprehends and means. The understanding is, in some measure, rid of the cloudy darkness, that hovered oft over it before: "They that were darkness" in this work of regeneration, are made "light in the Lord," Eph. v. 8. They are become light;—they were dead in trespasses and sins; here is a divine life made to spring up in them, that aims at God, that aims at heaven, that aims at immortal things; and whatever is born, must be fed; here is a new creature born, that cannot be fed at the common rate, how should this heighten and raise hope!

2. He hath taken them into union with his own Son, who is the primary great heir, and in whose right they come to be sons, and so come to be heirs; how should this raise hope in me! I am taken into union with the Son of God. If you receive him, you are so; that is the *amplexus* of the soul; that faith by which the soul receives him, thereby it comes to be adjoined to him, and so to be invested secondarily with his right. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," John i. 12. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." If you share with him in the sonship, then you share with him in the inheritance too. You have a right, even as the sons of God, to this inheritance; this heavenly state, in all the blessedness and glory of it, belongs to you by right of inheritance; or as you are heirs of it, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ," and so you are to be glorified with him. And what? are you not to hope for your own inheritance? That which doth belong to you by right of inheritance, are you not to live in the hopes of it? And,

3. There is God's special promise superadded to all this; to wit, that he will give grace and glory; and that the things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, are all prepared for them that love him." And,

4. He hath added his oath to his promise, that the heirs of promise might have strong consolation from the two immutable things, the promise and the oath superadded, by which it is impossible for God to lie, Heb. vi. 17, 18. And why should not hope live and flourish, in reference to this inheritance, the heavenly state you are finally to look for upon all this? Therefore, take that for a further direction, often to recount with yourselves the express confirmations and assurances, which God hath given of his special kindness to his own, and of their right to the heavenly inheritance. And again,

Direction 8. Often renew your covenant with God, that so this hope may be cherished and live in you. Renew your covenant with God often, by which he becomes yours, and you his; by which he once became so, that so you may have a constant, explicit notion, or apprehension of him, as such; that you may not look towards him as a stranger, as an unrelated one. There is nothing needful to make him yours, and you his, but this mutual agreement by covenant between him and you. The matter is unalterable on his part; and you may be sure that nothing is more requisite on your part; nothing can be more requisite, than that you often commune with yourselves about this

matter; Do I stand to my covenant? I once said I was willing that God in Christ should be mine, and that I in Christ should be his; am I still willing? Do I stand to this covenant with God in Christ; yea or no?

Then consider, whence are your expectations to be? I am not to have my great expectations from a stranger, from a strange god, but from a God of my own. "This God is our God for ever and ever, and he that shall be our guide even unto death," Ps. xlviii. last verse. How great a thing is it to be able to say, "God, even our own God, shall bless," Ps. lxvii. 6. Your hope will languish if you let the apprehension dwindle of the relation between God and you; so that you look not towards him from day to day, and at all times, as a God related to you, upon the terms, and by the tenor, of an everlasting covenant; how wisely will that man look about him in his wants, and in his languishings, that hath no one to expect help and relief from; from one no more than from another! That is, if all about him, or with whom he is to expect, are equally strangers to him, and he can have no more expectation from one than from another. To hear of the name of God, that he is a great God, a bountiful God, and that there is an immense fulness of goodness in him; but what is that to me, when I have no concern with him, nor he with me? But when you know, that there is nothing requisite to bring about a fixed relation between him and you, but your consenting to the terms of his covenant; "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine," Ezek. xvi. 8. If that be from time to time recognised, be made more and more explicit, then are you to walk in this sense from day to day. This God is my God, and I am his. And then what may you not hope for? what may you not expect from him, in reference to present support, and final blessedness? And again,

Direction 9. Keep up a continual intercourse with God hereupon, walk with him if he be yours and you be his, and that is ascertained by a sure covenant often recognised; then accordingly, walk with him continually, keep up an intercourse by acts of reverence, and trust, and love, and subjection; so is the intercourse to be kept up, for you must consider, it is not an intercourse *inter pares*, between equals; but it is an intercourse between an all sufficient God, a self-sufficient God, a sovereign Lord and Ruler, and a mean indigent object, and (who ought to be) a subject creature; and so only ought the intercourse to be kept up. "As the Father loveth me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love," John iv. 9, 10. And so are we directed to keep ourselves in the "love of God," Jude, ver. 21. This is the way to maintain hope, waiting for his mercy by Christ Jesus to life eternal. Be in his fear all the day long, keep your hearts in a subject frame and posture towards him; keep you in a depending frame; keep you in a complacential frame, always apt and ready to exert acts of love, kindness, and good-will towards God. Oh! that I could do more for thee! I love thy name, thy honour, thy interest, thy presence, thy communion. In this way let intercourse with God be kept up, and so hope will flourish, will do its part towards the saving of you; even the saving you out of the gulf in which you now lie, almost swallowed up, only to be saved by this hope, such a hope as is subservient and conducing thereunto. Again,

Direction 10. If such an intercourse should be intermitted, (as can never be, but by slips and failings on your part,) hasten the restoring of it. As you value the life of your hope, and as you value the life of your souls, hasten the restoring of it. That is not to be borne, for one to say, Now the intercourse ceaseth between God and me! What? that there should be a discontinuance of my commerce with God, this is not to be borne. Oh! hasten to get all rectified, and set aright, by renewed applications of the blood of Jesus; by speedy and serious turning to God with all the heart, and with all the soul. By any such more observable slips hope hath got a wound, and it is to be healed, recovered, redintegrated, by such a return; your return to God in Christ speedily and betimes.

Direction 11. After that walk more "circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise," as knowing you are to live and be saved by hope; and your hope is to live, and be maintained, by your continual commerce with God. Walk accurately according to the Gospel instructions; to wit, according to the instructions and teachings of appearing grace. The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared, teaching us, what? that "denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we do live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world;" and what is the consequent hereupon? "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Now, as being taught effectually by the grace that hath appeared bringing salvation, oh, deny "all ungodliness," and every thing of ungodliness; deny it as an abhorred thing, and a most abominable thing. What? should I bear an ungodly frame of heart to him, whose grace hath appeared to save me? And all "worldly lusts;" shall worldly lusts rule in me, and govern me, who am a disciple of grace, and under the teachings of grace? And it teaches me to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Oh! let us comply with these teachings, when we see what will be the end of it, what will follow, then we shall live "looking for the blessed hope." How reviving will our own hope be to us then! how full of vigour, how full of sweetness, and how full of power and life! Every thought of that blessed state will even bless our souls, and make them flourish as a field that the Lord hath blessed. And,

Direction 12. Converse much with them that have the same hope that you have. That is a very heart-strengthening thing, mightily animating, to have much conversation with them that will give you a reason of the hope that is in them, "with meekness and fear;" (1 Pet. iii. 15.) and to whom also, you may give a reason of the hope that is in you, with the same meekness and the same fear. That is fruitful, edifying conversation, to converse with them that will interchange accounts with you of the reason of their hopes, which you can give them, and they can give you. But if there be any that care not for that society, that can take a thousand times more pleasure to talk two or three hours over a glass of wine in a tavern, with impertinent, idle fellows, from whom there is nothing of good to be gotten; this is that they rather choose, which they can savour, can take complacency in; but all discourses about God, and the things of God, and the world to come, and the matters of an eternal hope, are unsavoury and unpleasant. If this be with any an habitual frame, from week to week, and from month to month, and from year to year, and yet they will tell you they hope to be saved; oh! the monstrous stupidity of these wretched souls! What are they sunk into, and what under this very Gospel, which makes all things so very plain!

I tremble to think of the case of such, when they have nothing at all to keep off terrors from their hearts, but either a present peremptory refusal to think, I will think of no such thing; or the vain hope of a death-bed repentance at last, that shall expiate for so sensual and unchristian a life. I tremble (I say) to think what the case of such men will be at last. They may have some confidence in a death-bed repentance at a distance, while they put off from them the evil day; but that repentance may be far fled, removed, and hid from their eyes, when the dying hour is come, and when they are stretched out on the bed of sickness and languishing. And will God overthrow his own design, merely to comply with the brutish inclination of this or of that man, when his design is to have a people in this world, that shall in their continual, holy heavenly conversation, testify against the wicked conversation of it? But he shall dispense with them, and let them live like so many brutal sots all their days, and save them at last, because they say they will repent upon a dying bed; but how such will dare to die, God knows; when in the mean time they hardly dare to come to an ordinance of God, but make all the shift they can to avoid serious and searching preaching; and think it a great gain to them, if they can this or that day avoid a blow. Thou that hast lived so long in the indulgence of sensual and brutish inclinations, that art afraid to come to a sermon, or come to the Lord's table; or the like guilt stares thee in the face; how wilt thou not be afraid to die, and to appear at last before the tribunal of thy judge? Will God alter his Gospel for you, and determine that a man may live an earthly and carnal life in this world,

and be saved at last; though he hath told us, that they who mind earthly things, (the gust and relish of their souls lies there, they savour them,) their end is destruction, and they are enemies to the cross of Christ? They counter-design the end of Christ's dying, and so their end is destruction. And I add,

Direction 13. Take heed of too impatient a sense of the tediousness of your expecting state, while you are expecting; we must be expectants here; we are saved by hope. There needs a great deal of patience; not only in order to bearing, but in order to expecting; not only in order to the bearing of evil things, but in order to the expecting of good things; "ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, you might receive the promise," Heb. x. 36. And see what immediately follows the text; "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man sees, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it:" so we read of "the patience of hope," (1 Thess. i. 3.) as that which the apostle blesseth God for, on the behalf of those Thessalonian Christians, having heard of their patience of hope, how cheerfully they did endure in an expecting state. And,

Direction 14. Labour to fortify yourselves against the fear of death, that so your hope may live and flourish. That inasmuch as the final object of your hope lies beyond time, and beyond this present world; it is a sad thing there should be that gulf between you and the last object of your hope, which you dare not shoot; but are afraid of that which you supremely are to hope for. How very uncomfortable a case is that, that the highest matter of your hope should be also the matter of your fear, the going into that estate wherein mortality is to be swallowed up of life? What? are we afraid of becoming immortal? To be angels' fellows, equal with the angels of God, gathered up to the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect? Are we afraid indeed of that which we are chiefly to hope for? Oh! labour to overcome that fear; know that Christ died for this end, that you might do it. He was partaker of flesh and blood, he took a human body as we have here; that "by death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject unto bondage."

It is not only an uncomfortable, and an unchristian, but it is an irrational thing, and an unmanly thing, to live under the continual dominion and government of the fear of that which cannot be avoided. That is irrational; no man can give account of his own reason, why he should do so. It is a scandal even to the reason of a man, to be engaged in a continual contest against impossibilities; that which cannot be avoided, it is impossible I should avoid it. And to be in a constant war with this, is what no man can reconcile to his own understanding, if he do but use the understanding of a man.

And, therefore, there is nothing to be done in the case, but to fall into a speedy union with the great Prince and Lord of life, and then never fear death; that being the state of our case, that this death lies between us and our great hope, our final hope; when we think what we are to enjoy after death, one would go through a thousand deaths to enjoy that; and much more to die once to escape a thousand deaths. We die here every day; we are killed a thousand times over, from day to day, and from week to week; and if we would die a thousand deaths that way, to avoid one death, sure we may die one death, which we are to suffer unavoidably, that we may enjoy what we are to enjoy afterwards. Then I add,

Direction 15. That if we are to hope for the blessedness of the other state, as our last end, we are to hope too for whatsoever is certainly intermediate to the universal introduction of that state; and, therefore, so far as any better time or state of things in this world is ascertained to us, we are to live in the hope of it, as that which shall antecede our end; for it is the last end that our last hope terminates upon. But then, in the last place,

Direction 16. Take heed of letting your hope ultimately pitch upon any thing but what is itself ultimate; that is, take heed of letting your hope settle upon any thing on this side a blessed, glorious eternity, or upon any other state of things; take heed of having your spirits so deeply engaged upon any better state of things on earth, that you mind less, or with much more coolness, and indifferency, the concernments of the eternal state. Be not so much taken up in the thoughts and expectations of a better scene of things in this lower world, that the very thoughts of heaven, and a blessed eternity, should be unsavoury, and unpleasant.

This a very grievous, (I might say,) a mortal evil; so preposterously doth it invert the course of things; it takes down the supreme end, and substitutes somewhat inferior in the room and stead of that. And though this spiritual distemper may be indulged by many, under a spiritual pretence, I would fain see religion thrive more, and God be honoured and better served in this world; yet there is this to be said to it, it is well, if seriously we desire such things indeed; but if such desires after the best state of things that is supposable in this world do grow superior to the desires that we have of a perfect, blessed state of things in the other world; this is (I say) to set the means against the end; and so is quite to invert the order of things.

Live in the glorious expectation of eternity; and live also in the comfortable hope, that all things in this world in order thereunto shall be managed suitably and subserviently, by that wisdom that cannot err, or make a false step, and by a power that cannot be resisted, or disturbed; but there is a great deal of carnality under that pretence of spirituality; and hence comes that contestation of interest and parties; party against party, and interest against interest. There will be perpetual quarrels, while all men are not of a mind about things within the compass of time; but in reference to the glory of the eternal state, there can be no possibility of such collision, but all will adoringly and joyfully fall into everlasting adoration and praise.

And this must be the matter of our last hope. And so I shall shut up all with the prayer of the apostle; "Now the God of peace, that hath given us eternal consolation, and good hope through grace, fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God.

In recommending to you several requisites for a continual course of friendship with Christ, I did not mention that of trust, than which there is not a greater requisite to friendship. But that I intend to be spoken to by itself. And therefore have pitched upon this text. Now to proceed gradually, and in some method. There are four previous things which I shall premise. As, 1. Where do we find Abraham to be called the friend of God? for it refers to a former scripture, as fulfilled, that God did treat him as a friend. We find him expressly so called, 2 Chron. xx. 7. There was a numerous, potent enemy that did seek to keep out the people of God from possessing that land which God had given to the seed of Abraham his friend. And Jehoshaphat urgeth this to God in prayer. So we have it again, Isa. xli. 8. where there being an occasion to mention Abraham, he is spoken of also as the friend of God; "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." But, 2. We are to consider and take notice under what notion Abraham is spoken of by that glorious title of the friend of God. It is true he was an eminent saint. But was this spoken of him under that notion? or is it not under a common notion as a believer? So it seems to be in the text. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God." This is a notion common to him and to all believers; and this still must

then agree with the rest of believers. Then, 3. We are further to consider what sort of faith this was in which Abraham is accounted a righteous person and called the friend of God. It is plain that that faith did not consist only in believing the general promise of having a numerous seed. It did not terminate on God, abstractly, without a reference to Christ. It did not stand in a cold and ineffectual assent to any divine truth whatsoever—for the whole context shows the insufficiency of such a faith. But to speak to this positively, and briefly, we shall consider the object and nature of this faith. As,

1. For the object of it, it is evident that it did comprehend and take in four representations of Christ. How distinct and explicit his understanding thereof was we cannot determine. But he had some notion of it; for our Lord himself saith, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad," John viii. 56. And this must be a truth with us which none can question. And we are told, that very good promised to Abraham did eminently intend that one seed, which was Christ, Gal. iii. 16. And we are there also told, verse 17. that the covenant, that was not at first made but renewed with Abraham, was the covenant of God in Christ. And we are likewise told that this seed of his was to possess the gates of their enemies; and that nations should be blessed in him. So that his mind was directed, that from this seed of his, himself should expect blessedness. And it cannot otherwise be supposed. And ergo, that as the eye was fixed upon Christ, as his seed by promise, and through that to be blessed himself. The prophets themselves did not fully understand their own prophesying of him. Some prophecies they must be supposed to have, though not most distinct and clear to themselves. So we find, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." And,

2. As to the nature or kind of that faith, in reference to the object, it must be such as, according to his understanding of the discovery he had there, must be an embracing of his heart and will towards this object. He doth close with Christ according to the representation he had of him. Christ was the sum and substance of the Gospel—faith in the mind and heart of Abraham, as far as the discovery was made to him.

And now the way is plain to that which I principally intend for the ground of discourse from this text, to wit:

Doctrine. That there is much of friendly commerce between the blessed God and souls of men in and about the production and exercise of that faith upon which he counts them righteous, and doth justify, and will finally save them. This is the substance of what I intend to insist upon from the whole of this text. I take it to be clear that Abraham's faith was the same for kind and nature with that by which all believers are justified and saved. And he was called the friend of God. And then I say there is much friendly converse between God and souls in the production and service of that faith which justifies and saves. Now take notice,

1. That I do not consider that discovery of friendship in the single act of faith, but take a further latitude, as to the production and exercising of that faith. There is a friendship in that whole ingratiation between God and souls, when he is about producing, and they about the exercising, of that faith. And again,

2. Take notice, that I do not speak of faith here as justifying only, but of faith as saving also, being led thereto by the context, and by my own design. By the context, which speaks of faith under both notions: as *justifying*, in the words next following; and as *saving*, in the 14th verse: Can such a faith save him? and upon account of my own design, *i. e.* of discovering the friendship which appears in this matter, which certainly is eminently seen at the last in salvation, as that is the result of all the transaction between God and the soul in these matters. And again,

3. Take notice that hereupon this friendship is not to be considered merely as begun, but as continued unto the last: for friendship doth not lie in a single act, but a state. And ergo, there must be a continued course of friendship, frequent repetitions of such a kind and manner as there was in the inchoation, the beginning of this friendship. There may be intervals of it, after some notable failure on the one part or the other. And there must be somewhat done to the keeping of it on foot throughout; for that it never be totally broken off with them whom the end, the perfection, the consummation of it, shall take place at last, to wit, their final and eternal salvation. And,

4. Further consider this, that wheresoever there is true friendship (admitting it to be called so in the best and proper sense) it must be mutual. A man cannot truly and properly be said to be a friend with an inanimate subject, and there may be a disparity both natural and moral. As I can have no friendship, or there can be no entire and full friendship between me and a stone; so neither can there be between me and an enemy. Though I may have friendly propensions towards such a one, yet an actual, friendly intercourse there cannot be, if there be an incapacity in the other subject, either natural or moral. Ergo, to speak to the subject of the intercourses of friendship, that are in this transaction between God and the soul in and about this production, and exercising of that faith by which he justifies and saves, it was fit to premise these things. And these things being clear, I am to show,

I. What there is of a friendly propension on God's part towards the souls of such with whom he so negociates, in the management and conduct of this matter. And the friendship herein, on his part, appears in general in these two things.

1. In friendly instructions and counsels; and,

2. In friendly performances, or actual communications.

1. In friendly instructions and counsels: so he is a wise friend; as in the other he is a powerful one. His wisdom appears in his instructions and counsels; and his power in his performances and communications; but neither of these exclusively of the other. And,

(1.) It is much of friendly propension that God discovers to men in bringing about that faith which is justifying, in the friendly instructions and counsels he affords them in order hereunto. And we must take in this, that what as to his purpose he speaks by his word to them, he doth by his Spirit impress upon them. This is as the seal to the wax, which makes and leaves its impress thereon. What he speaks outwardly by his word, he speaks internally by his spirit, which makes use of the word to enlighten their minds with, and begets correspondent characters on the soul, so as to make the word effectual. And,

He instructs them concerning their undone and miserable state while they remain strangers to him, and enemies against him. He speaks copiously to them of this by his word; and must be understood to speak correspondently hereof by his Spirit. Thou art in a state of separation from me, who am the Author of thy being and blessedness. Thou art insensible of this state, and thou thinkest that thou needest not God, thou canst live without him in the world. Whereas thou art lost, a guilty creature, liable to wrath: and thou art an impotent creature; thou canst not escape or deliver thyself: and what will become of thee, thou hast not righteousness nor strength! It is necessary that the soul do apprehend and feel this, and the misery of his state while he hath no God, no interest in him, nor righteousness to recommend him to God. Men have not a word to say for themselves in this case. The power of God is engaged against them. Against his justice they can say nothing, and against his power they can do nothing. When there is a design of friendship on foot, then God takes the soul aside, and shows it all this, to convince it. God now brings things home with a strong hand, and makes the soul consider what it may expect, if it continue in a war against Heaven. Then,

(2.) He instructs them (and there is much friendliness in it) concerning his own reconcileableness to sinners. God declares it in his word, and he speaks it over again to their own ears and hearts. Men will not mind what is said in the word. They might easily see that he is placable and willing to be reconciled; his giving them much of his goodness, and his exercising patience and long-suffering towards them, and all this to lead them to repentance. He expostulates the matter with men on plain evidence of the

things themselves: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Rom. ii. 4. But he hath spoken out to men in the Gospel, wherein he opens his heart, and declares his counsels to them. But all this needs to be spoken to men inwardly. He urgeth and inculcates his mind and will to them; reasons and argues with their souls. Why hast thou not understood all this hitherto? but thou understandest it now that I am a reconcileable God, if thou now fall not in with my method for this end. This is of mighty importance for bringing about such a friendship; for while men apprehend God to be irreconcileable, that will lead them to despair, and be a hell upon earth. But to behold a Gospel of grace and reconciliation, and having it set on so as to apprehend the thing indeed, this engageth the intention and mind to consider the terms offered. And then,

(3.) He instructs such souls about the great reconciler and mediator of their peace, into whose hands he hath put all this affair; unto whom they must be beholden, from whom they must receive all that grace that is requisite, either to the changing of the state, or the changing of the frame. And if men be not inwardly and with efficacy instructed concerning all this, the very doctrine of reconciliation itself would very slowly enter against those mighty objections, which it might meet with in a considering mind. For any one that understood the nature of God, and considered him as a being absolutely perfect, and so apprehended his holiness and his justice to be in the highest perfection in him; as well as his other governing attributes; if one thought should arise in the mind of such a person, about contracting a peace and friendship with his God, oh, how shall he answer it to himself, when his own mind tells him, *his* nature admits of no change, and my nature, by any power of my own, admits of none. God will not change his nature, and I cannot change mine. This very nature and natural state put me into a posture of direct hostility against his sovereign authority, against his justice, and against his holiness, all at once. If a man in this case hath no way in view how God can consistently with the honour and dignity of his authority and government, and the unalterableness of his eternal law, be reconciled to a sinner, and lead him into communion with himself: here lies an objection in the mind of such a one, against the sum of the Gospel, if that were held faith only in general. That is, that God is willing to be reconciled to sinners. For what? is he willing to deny himself? To come down from his throne, to quit his government? or is it possible to him to change his nature, to be less just and less holy than he essentially is? But when there cometh to be a distinct explication of the way and method wherein God can honourably, and consistently with his truth, justice, and holiness, be reconciled to sinners; to wit, by the discovery of the doctrine of the Mediator; and when this discovery is inwardly applied and brought home; that which was before a stumbling-block, and a mountain of opposition raised up in the soul against the truth and purpose of the Gospel, vanisheth, and the way is plain, smooth, and open to it; and so nothing remains but to fall in with it. But oh, how friendly is this, not only to speak this in an unregarded, external relation, but to speak it internally to the mind and soul, and make it apprehended and understood. To show unto man his righteousness, who it is that he must be beholden to for all that is requisite for the changing of his state, and for changing his natural frame and inclination, when he must have righteousness and strength. To declare all this by inward, internal light, oh how friendly is this converse! These things are spoken thousands of times over, to the stupid and inadvertent generally, and they never take notice of it. But when he comes to make light, and to shine through that darkness which inwrapt the heart, then hope begins to take place. Then saith such a soul, "I see it is a feasible thing, a practicable thing, that the Gospel proposes; I see God hath put the management of all these affairs into such a hand as can at once both reconcile his attributes to one another, and reconcile him to us, and us to him. And then,

(4.) He instructs concerning the way and method of coming to have an interest and part in Christ. So as to have both righteousness and spiritual life in him and by him, *i. e.* upon being united with him. This is the way; and he instructs the soul that there is not only a fulness of all grace in his Son, from whom they are to receive righteousness, and the regenerating Spirit also; but there is a way of coming to be interested in all his fulness, and in that renovating Spirit; and we then must be united to him. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom." Then we are told there must be union. And how is that to be brought about? Why, thou must be in him, in order to this interest and participation from him. This wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption, which are in Christ, are nothing to thee that hast no part in him; but his wisdom is thine, his righteousness is thine, his sanctification and redemption thine; but all this upon supposition that thou art in him. There must be such a union in order to that participation. But how is this union brought about? Why, he that is the author of the whole design, is the author of this union: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom," 1 Cor. i. 20. Thus this union must be of God.

But then you must consider this to be very proper and wholesome counsel to you. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee," Job xxii. 21. Sue to him for all such counsels as any wise man would take and follow. As Luke xiv. latter end. "Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace." This is good counsel, which is secretly prompted unto that. Oh, sinner, sue for peace. Thou canst never, with thy feeble power, oppose and contend in a war against Almightiness itself, that comes armed with terror and vengeance against thee. This cannot be: it is thy way to sue for peace. And we are told in what way God will be reconciled, if ever to be reconciled; that is, it must be in and by the Mediator. Here is suitable counsel given thee. He counsels thee, Rev. iii. 18. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." You are externally counselled to all this in the Gospel. And it may be there are such direct intimations given to minds too; it is likely very often but little regarded. But that such counsel should be given is very friendly. What wilt thou do, thou undone, lost creature? Thou hast no clothing, but must appear naked before the Divine vindictive justice; nothing to fence thee, nothing to arm thee against the stroke of vengeance. Thou art running on blindly upon thy own ruin. I tell thee where there is eye-salve for thee, and where there is clothing for thee, and where there is every thing that thy necessitous, indigent, undone state requires and needs; I counsel thee to betake thyself to him, to apply to him. This is very friendly counsel. It is friendly in the design, and aspect, and tendency of it, as it presents itself to thee in the external word; but much more when it is inwardly suggested, when the thing is inculcated inwardly to the mind and heart, and thou art beaten upon by these things, thou art so and so counselled. Why dost thou not hearken to counsel? Why, in such things as these, there appears much of friendship on God's part; that is, in the friendly instructions and counsels which he is pleased to give, especially internally and correspondently, as it must be, with the external revelation of his mind concerning these things.

SERMON XXIX.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

2. THE friendship of God appears in his friendly performances and effectual communications. We are to know that his friendly design towards souls doth not terminate here; it reacheth further. That is applicable enough in this case which is spoken in reference to lower and inferior cases in the 15th and 16th verses of this same chapter; "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" It would profit as little if God should himself but at the same rate treat men's souls; give them good words, though very apposite and suitable to their case; say to them, Be warmed, be filled; but not give them the things requisite to their souls; what would that profit them? Compare that with 1 John iii. 17. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" What he may show of kindness and good-will is nothing like the love of God. God's friendly propension towards miserable, necessitous souls, did show itself at another rate than merely in advising and counselling them, or seeming to wish them well; his friendship exercises itself in the most considerable acts of external benefaction, in doing them good, and rejoicing over them to do them good, "with all his heart and with all his soul," as the expression is, and his own words are. But as to this also, I shall give you instances how this kind of friendship, by way of communication and performance, on God's part appears. As,

(1.) That he ingenerates this faith; he works it in us. It is called a "fruit of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22. And it is said to proceed from the "Spirit of faith," 2 Cor. iv. 13. We are told that "by faith we are saved, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. That faith we are not to take separately and alone; but it heightens the love and gift, that we do believe and are saved by faith, "and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God." It is by this faith that the soul is brought into union with his Saviour; by it, it comes to him; by it, they receive him, (John i. 12.) and it is by this they come to the Son, and to have life, 1 John v. 11. It is in order hereto, that God the Father is said to draw souls to Christ, and they are said to come to him. John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." What friendliness is this to induce and draw souls to Christ! We must understand that drawing aright. It is not dragging by violence, but as himself expresses it, that, (Hosea xi. 4.) "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love! and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." It is by a gentle but effectual allection, drawing you to him; making it by reason and love in conjunction, to appear to be your interest and concern; and so working on love to yourselves that it may be improved into a love to him too. When they are brought in with a love upon indigency first, they may grow into a love of complacency and highest delight afterwards; one love being the loadstone of another—loving because you are first loved. But look into these acts, and you will see what a friendly design there must be in faith which is produced by union with Christ. By the result of that faith, you will see the kindness of it. There must be friendship in him that will engage my trust when it is nothing to him: he gains nothing by it, but it is necessary and beneficial to me. I do in this case take pains with myself to trust in him, working, but only so as one man may upon another in order thereunto; for they cannot immediately touch, and attract, and turn, and draw hearts. They can but use apt and suitable methods in order hereunto: but if they do that, there is much of kindness in the design; when one takes great pains, and uses industrious endeavours to induce to trust in him, he himself having no advantage by it, but I gain by it the greatest things. That the blessed God should induce and engage souls to trust in him, when it can be of no advantage to him; but he knows that without it they must perish and be lost; when he doth not only invite them to trust in the Lord, stay themselves upon their God, rely upon him and upon that truth and fidelity that never failed any; how friendly is this! To insist on it from time to time, not to give over the soul that hath often neglected him in making these overtures; this is wonderful friendly. To draw the soul into union with Christ, and with himself in and by him; this is to bring such into a state of blessedness. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus," &c. You are foolish creatures, but he will be wisdom to you; you are guilty creatures, but he will be righteousness to you: you are impure creatures, but he will be sanctification to you; you are enslaved creatures, but he will be redemption unto you: all this is of God. And whereas he doth manifestly design to reunite souls to his Son, and by him to himself; how friendly is this design. He intimates hereby that such and such can never be too near to him, or be too close with them. But,

2. This divine friendship appears in his hereupon counting them righteous, and imputing righteousness to them, as the text expresses it; "he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." This faith was given Abraham, and thereupon God counts him righteous; and so he does every believer besides. And is not this a most friendly estimate? is it not to count as a friend, to count us righteous who were far from righteousness? He not only pardons, but accepts as righteous. We should count this wonderful friendship, when we consider our state; we were creatures under a law that cursed every one that "continued not in all things written therein to do them;" and we had broken that whole law, in every part of our duty as to love of God, and our fellow-creatures of the same order. From the depraved nature of man, being carnalized into enmity against God, and hatred one of another, "the carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. viii. 7. This is more than the breach of every command; for my quarrel is not against this or that precept, but against subjection; and so my design is against the divine government; now, is not this friendly when he will thus give faith to such, and reckon and impute righteousness to them? I know there is, as to this, commonly introduced a very unnecessary and trifling dispute. What it is that is counted for righteousness? When the matter comes to be thus stated—is it the act of believing or the object believed on? and the question will be easily answered by putting another question:—Suppose it be asked, What is that which clothes a man?—is it his garment, or his putting it on? Sure a very ordinary understanding would find no difficulty to answer it. The garment would never clothe a man, if it were not put on; and the action that a man uses in putting on a thing would not have clothed him if he had not the garment; and ergo, these two must contribute together for this end, of being clothed, but in different kinds—it is the garment when put on that clothes him, and the action that is used in putting it on is no part of the clothing, but it was requisite thereunto, and that without which he could not have been clothed. All this is so obvious, that I might save the labour of applying it to the case in hand. What is it upon which a man is counted righteous in the sight of God? Why, he puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, and God puts him on, as it were, so that the Scripture phrase is intelligible enough. It is that which is put on which is the matter of this clothing, and the action that is used here is no part of that matter, and yet it is such a requisite as without which he would never be clothed.

What is it upon which a man is counted righteous before God?—why he puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, as was said. But how friendly is it that such men should upon such terms, and in such a way and method, be brought into that state of righteous persons, when, if they were not so clothed, they stood exposed and naked unto vindictive justice armed with power even to the highest. But now the sword of vengeance cannot touch them; otherwise,

* Preached Sept. 24th, 1699.

thou wert every moment liable. Oh, what friendliness is there in all this! Again,—

3. This friendship appears in this matter herein, that when God imputes righteousness to the believer, he imparts his Spirit; and this is wonderful friendliness, if the distress of the case be considered. Plain it is, that the miserable sinner did need somewhat else besides cloathing, and without it he must have been miserable for ever. And most certain it is, that the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ was never designed to be the cloathing of a carcass. The soul that was "dead in trespasses and sins" is made alive when made righteous. There is no need of disputing about priority here; the righteousness and Spirit of Christ are given together; they are simultaneous gifts; he doth not give life by the Spirit to such souls because he hath made them righteous; nor doth he make them righteous because he hath given them life, or given his Spirit; but these are co-ordinate streams from the same fountain of Divine grace. "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11.—And a horrid catalogue of wickedness was recited in the foregoing 9th and 10th verses, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,—nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Righteousness and Spirit are given together; and should we suppose these gifts to be separate, the former would avail little without the latter; for heaven would never be heaven to a dead soul; if it were possible for such a soul, upon the account of Christ's righteousness, to be admitted into heaven, what would a dead soul do there? Therefore, they are gifts of Divine grace conferred together. It would be a horrid reproach and contempt that the righteousness of the Son of God should be made a covering for continuing the deformity and loathsomeness of a carcass that should be only hid, and not cured. This is a most unsupposable thing, and, than which, nothing would be more ignominious, not only to the wisdom of God, but to his grace too; for sure it is more abundant grace to cure these two evils together, than one alone; to heal him inwardly and cloathe him outwardly at the same time. And again.

4. This friendly inclination on God's part doth further appear in giving repentance to the sinner, which is comprehended in the gift of the Spirit, as every other grace is; only here I must, before I speak more distinctly to this of repentance, enlarge somewhat to show you under what distinct considerations we are to look on this gift of the Spirit that comprehends all the rest.—The Spirit is given in order to its first working, and in order to its after-employment and work that it hath to do in the souls of men. It is not otherwise capable of being given at all, than only relatively and effectively in respect of the relation and effect. But it is not hard to understand in what sense (when a person is the thing spoken of) one can be said to be given to another: it is not the one's being made the other's being; there is nobody so absurd as to understand the matter so; but only such a one becomes related who was unrelated before, and upon that relation doth such works to which relation obligeth, and that he was not obliged to do before. This is the meaning of giving one person to another, in common language amongst men; and so must be the meaning of the Spirit's being given to any of us, that is, that it becomes now related by covenant to us, having been unrelated before; for, when by covenant we take God to be our God, what do we take? not the essence of God abstractedly, but we take God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, who all become related to us for several purposes—God to be the prime author of being to us, Christ to be our redeemer, the Spirit to be our enlightener and sanctifier; and all as comprehended in the covenant by which God is said to be our God and we to be his people; as is sufficiently and expressly enough signified by the baptismal form; which baptism brings a signal, a token, a seal, of this covenant. We are ergo baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be continually our God. And now hereupon the Spirit becomes ours by covenant, or, we having a covenant interest in him, he comes to do such work, or to work such effects in those to whom he is now become so related, as he works no where else. And so he is with them, and in them, to that very purpose. It is true, the Spirit is all the world over in every man, in every creature, in every thing; "Whither shall I flee from thy Spirit?" Psalm cxxxix. 5. But he is in such as these, for such and such special gracious purposes as he doth not effect and bring about in any others, but those to whom he is in covenant so related. And this being so far clear then we must distinguish between his first operations upon souls, and the consequent operations for which those former do prepare and make way. Whatsoever was necessary to be done previously, all that enlightening, all that conviction, which must immediately accompany, and, in some respects, in order of nature, but not of time, be before saving faith, if these do come within the compass of saving *grace* (for there are operations that be only within the compass of common grace, which may be before, and long before, in time.) But whatsoever lies within the compass of saving grace they are all at once. There must be very great exertions of the power and influence of the Holy Spirit in bringing men to believe; and in doing so he does, as it were, work as a visitant, but afterwards he works and operates as an inhabitant; having by his former operations prepared his own habitation, built his temple, now he comes to inhabit this temple, to dwell in it, and to exert himself in all suitable communications and operations from time to time there; as in that 1 Cor. iii. 16. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" There never would have been any act of saving grace at all without his Spirit; but there be such acts as are antecedaneous to its indwelling presence, and which he doth as a visitant; whereas there are continual exertions of the grace and power of the Spirit to be done by it afterwards. And how marvellous friendship is this, that God should give his own Spirit to inhabit (with kind designs, and in order to such gracious purposes and ends) such wretched creatures as we. Of all ways you can think of whatsoever to express friendship to another, if it were within the compass of your power it would be in giving them the same mind, the same spirit, the same sentiments of things that you yourself have, wherein you suppose them to be right; you would have them to have every thing of your mind and your spirit (except what you could of yourselves apprehend to be imperfection, infirmity, and defect:) and there was no possible way, if that were in our power, to express kindness and friendship so significantly as this way. If a wise man, a good man, could convey to a son, not only his lands, his tithes, his honours, his dignities, but could convey his wisdom, his goodness, his integrity, certainly here were the greatest kindness showed in this that it were possible for a creature to express. If I would do the part of a friend to the uttermost, (and this lay within the compass of my power,) wherein I thought my friend and my spirit to be right, I would impart to such a one my mind and spirit, that he may be of the same mind. Herein would be the truest friendship; for where there is the truest friendship, and there is the most agreement in minds, they do insensibly mould and form one another, and impress one another. But hereunto there must be a divine power, according to which all things are given pertaining to life and godliness, and the participation (comprehensive of all the rest) of the Divine nature, as it is expressed 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. "According as his Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." There is a Divine Spirit, and thereby we are made partakers of the Divine nature,—of all gracious principles and dispositions of one kind and another. How admirable friendship is there in this, that the holy God should give into the breast and bosom of a man, that pure and holy Spirit, to be an inhabitant and indweller there, to chase away the darkness that inwrap that wretched soul, to inspire it with a new and holy life, to implant the principles most connatural to such a life, and which are to have their constant exercise through

the whole of a man's course. Oh! the friendliness that doth appear in this! But when all this is done, and the soul is made capable of acting, here cannot but be, as I said, in the fourth place—

SERMON XXX.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

4. The exercise of repentance towards God; and the bringing of the soul to this hath the most of friendliness that can be expressed. It is he that brings the soul to the necessary exercise of repentance and godly sorrow, whereby men are brought off from sin, and brought home to God. I would now have you to understand, that I do not, by mentioning these things in this order wherein I do, say that there is such an order punctually observed by God in the effecting and bringing about these things. But where there are many particulars to be mentioned to you, it is impossible they can all be mentioned in one breath; we can but mention one after another. But God's order of doing things may not be always the same. Some acts may be produced first in such an order, and (for ought we know) afterwards in another. And most certain we are, that for the substance of all that is requisite to the salvation and blessedness of the soul, it may, and for ought we know, always is done in one and the same moment, when God regenerates it, visiting it with his Son, and so pardons and justifies it, and entitleth it to eternal life. And it is very possible, that that very moment wherein he first applies himself to the soul to unite it to Christ, may be at the moment of its separation from this body. And so, all that is necessary to salvation must be done in that moment, or the soul must be lost, and for ought we know, it may be always so. But, I say, notwithstanding that when there are many things that are distinct in themselves, that is, that are capable of distinct conceptions in our minds, none of these things are to be overlooked; we must distinctly mention things that do occur, though we cannot mention them all in one moment of breath.

But most certain it is, that there is in this very case repentance necessary; and there is the exercise of repentance necessary. So faith is necessary, not only the principle of faith, but the act and exercise too; for when we are said to be justified by faith, what is the meaning of that? By a disposition to believe: the mere disposition to believe is not believing. We are said to be justified by faith, Rom. v. 1. so Gal. ii. 16. it is said we have believed, that we might be justified. We have believed, not have been disposed only to believe, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ. Why so, after the same manner, when it is said, "Repent, that your sins may be blotted out;" the meaning cannot be, that there be some disposition in you to repent, Acts iii. 19. "Repent, for the remission of sins," Acts ii. 38. The meaning cannot be, that there be in you some essay, some tendency, some inclinations to repentance; but, repent, except you repent (not except you be some way inclined to it) ye shall all likewise perish. Herein, I say, inasmuch as such a repentance is so conjunct a thing with a safe state for a sinner, there appears most admirable friendliness in this matter. That a heart that was most adverse and disaffected to God before, should be turned to him; that a heart that was before a stone, a rock, should be so relenting; how admirable a thing is this, if you consider at once both the necessity and the excellency, and the rarity of such a repentance. Take these things together, and it is most admirable friendship that appears in giving repentance. It is spoken with admiration, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life," Acts xi. 18. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," Acts v. 31.

1. Consider the necessity of it, and you acknowledge the friendliness of it. Any one that understood the state of his own case, if he had but so much sense about him as to consider what he should do, and how incapable he is of doing it, would say, Lord, what shall I do with this wretched heart of mine? I can as soon dissolve a rock as melt it down. I cannot make it relent or bleed. The most proper, the most weighty, most important thoughts I can take up, do all hover on the surface, and never enter, have no mollifying influence, are productive of nothing; well, now for God to say, this is a thing that shall be done—I will take away the heart of stone; this soul of thine it must dissolve or perish; thou must repent or die. Thy faint strugglings prove thy impotency; I will relieve in this distressed case. Oh what friendship is here! And,

2. If we consider the excellency of the thing wrought in this case, it is a most friendly work. It restores the lost creature to itself, and brings it to God. A most glorious work! Thy wretched soul is not itself till it repent. Repentance is a becoming wise. It is a soul's return to a sound and sober sense of things, of which it was destitute before. The character that Ecclesiastes gives of the hearts of men generally, which we heard opened heretofore, is—madness is in their hearts. Repentance is the cure of this madness. It is by it they return to a sound mind; and it is by it they return to God. "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;" you find how they are conjoined, Acts xx. 21. A wandering creature, that hath spent its time hitherto in perpetual deviations from the living God, now comes back to him. Admirable friendliness, to produce and bring about this return! Long it was and not such a thought taken up, Where is God my maker? There was no miss of God. How is the soul, after the Divine touch and impress put upon it, impatient of longer distance! I can live without God no longer; where is God my maker? This resolution possesses it; "I will arise and go to my father, and say, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Perhaps there were some cold relentings before, but now that matter is resolved; and it is the power of Divine grace, giving repentance, that resolves and determines it. Now a deceptation is out of doors, laid aside. And whereas the matter was long at this pass, Shall I? Shall I? Shall I break off from this way of sin? Shall I abandon that lust which did domineer, and unto which I did enslave myself? Now the soul will be no longer at this pass; Shall I? Shall I? But when God gives it repentance, he brings the matter to this: the soul says, "I will arise and go to my Father," and throw myself at his feet, and cry for mercy, as that which I can no longer live and be without. I can remain in this irresolution no longer. This is giving repentance, and oh, how friendly! When by it the soul returns to itself and to its God at once. And again,

3. If you consider the rarity of such a work, it is wonderful friendliness. How many are there, who sit a life's time under that Gospel, which is Christ's call continually to repentance! "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Many live a life's time under that Gospel by which he calls, but his call is regarded no more than the whistling of the wind among the leaves of the trees. "I called, but they gave me no answer: I called, but ye refused: I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded," Prov. i. 24. And what proves the issue of this with, God knows, too many? Ye shall call, but I will not regard; ye shall make many prayers, and I will not hear; "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." Consider this as the common case, and what wonderful friendliness is it when he gives repentance! When he enables a poor creature to fall before him in the dust, with self-loathing, cloathing itself with shame and confusion before him; when he hath brought it to a supplicating posture; when he hath made it feel wounds and remorse within itself, which the most never feel;—let but these things be considered together, the necessity, the excellency, and the rarity of serious repentance, and it is wonderful friendliness when God worketh a soul to it.

5. Great friendliness appears in his begetting in the soul a universal frame of holiness and rectitude, that is spread through all the powers and faculties thereof. Though this, for ought we know, may be done in the same instant of

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time wherein he is said to regenerate a soul; yet it is capable of a distinct conception, and so ought not to be altogether confounded with that: for whenever it pleaseth God to touch a soul with a saving divine touch, that touch must be supposed to be vital. He toucheth it, and makes it live. He, by that touch, draws it into union with his Son, to him, so as that it comes to possess him, to have him (in the Scripture phrase;) and in having him it hath life, I John v. 12. Yet, for all this, the having a distinct, explicit frame of holy rectitude laid out through the soul, is a diverse thing; it is to be distinctly considered, supposing that that be by so quick and speedy an operation effected, as to be in the same moment of time. And so, though these be not separable things, they are distinct things. As, when the rational soul is first united with the unformed matter of a human body, there may be said to be a man virtually, though the several parts of the human body are distinctly formed by degrees. It is very true indeed, that where a spiritual being is the subject of an operation, there it may be quick, and, for aught we know, momentary; it may be done, for all we know, in a moment. Spirit being said to be the production, the thing produced in the case, as John iii. 6. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Why, supposing that, yet that first vital touch, by which it may be said to be regenerated, may be distinguished, though not separated, from this entire work of regeneration, by which the frame of holiness is superinduced—that work of sanctification. And so the most do distinguish regeneration from sanctification; as the former is the latter virtually, and the latter is the former actually and completely. And this frame consists of that concurrence of gracious principles that do belong to the new nature, now become explicit in the soul. They were all actually in the new nature when first given, but yet make a formed new man, as the Divine Spirit lays out the several lineaments thereof by his own operation and influence. And whether that be instantaneous, or whether it be in a continued succession of time, is a matter altogether so unknown, and so unknowable to us, that it would be lost time and labour to go about to dispute it. Besides, that the determination would be as little useful as it is possible. But certain it is, that besides the communication of the new nature and the new life, which virtually contain all holy gracious principles in it, there are holy gracious principles given themselves, which actually and formally obtain and have place in the soul, and are the fruits of the Spirit, which we find mentioned in distinct terms, Gal. v. 22, 23. and in divers other places.

6. With this falls in the mortifying and destroying the body of sin; and it is indifferent whether this be mentioned before the other, or after. It is altogether indifferent. For this work of the Divine Spirit, it may be very well wrought, by the opposite thereunto taking place in the soul, and making its own way, and expelling the former form, as this latter is itself introduced. As fire seizing upon any combustible matter, it doth at the same time expel the form of the wood or seal, and introduce its own form of fire. But that is a thing that must necessarily fall in, be the order what it will, and it makes little what the order be. But when there is a new man to be put on, there is the old man to be put off, and there is the body of sin and of flesh to be destroyed, so as that the soul is no longer to serve sin. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is to free it from the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2. It is altogether an unconceivable thing, that when the soul is in union with Christ, and entitled to a righteousness by him of his working out, that it should at the same time continue in a stated rebellion against God, and under the governing power of reigning sin; of sin still in the throne, and still giving law, or still being a law in the soul,—the law of sin and death. These things can no more consist. The reign and power of sin is broken in the same instant that any one's state is changed. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace;" under the law, as it is a condemning law. Why, then, at the same time that the sinner ceases to be condemned, sin ceaseth to reign. If it hath no condemning power, it hath no dominion. To be under the condemning power of sin, and to be under grace, these are inconsistent. And to be under grace, and to be under the power of sin regnant, are equally inconsistent. "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." It will not consist with your state, with that state which you are to conclude is yours, and is proper to you now, that is, a state of holy life into which you are regenerated. "Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 11. The apostle is not teaching these to make a false judgment. He would not have them reckon themselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ, if they were not alive, or if they were still dead. But if they be so alive, if the life of grace doth come to have any place in them, the reigning of sin is at an end, as the next words show. Sin is no longer to reign in their mortal bodies. And in the 14th verse, "it can have no dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." And you are resigned, (as the intervening 13th verse says,) "yielding yourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead."

Now how admirable friendship is there in this too, considering the base servitude that all were naturally in unto sin before. With how kind an eye doth the blessed God behold from his throne above, the enthralled, miserable state of wretched souls serving divers lusts and pleasures; drudging to the devil for the wages of death, and no other. Not dictated to by those lusts of theirs, which, being fulfilled, destroy them. "The wages of sin is death." It is only then when men come to have their fruit unto holiness that they have for their end everlasting life, Rom. vi. 22. That there should be so compassionate an eye cast upon the miserable state of forlorn souls upon this account, seeing them so injuriously imposed upon, held in so vile a vassalage, so ignoble a servitude, which hath so destructive a tendency, that they are led as so many slaves in bonds and cords to their destruction and final ruin, to which their course and state do naturally tend;—that God should look down with so compassionate an eye upon the distress of these wretched creatures, and determine with himself; lay the design in his wise and good counsel—I will work the freedom of these wretched souls; I have appointed a Redeemer for them, that is proper for their state of slavery;—the notion of redemption most appositely answers the notion of the enthralled state of sinners before. And ergo, it is observable, Tit. ii. 14. that our Lord is said to give himself for us "to redeem us from all iniquity." Not only to redeem us from wrath and from hell, and final ruin, but "from all iniquity."

And that is one consequent of our being in Christ, or our union with him. If ever we are said to be in him, then he is made to us redemption. Sanctification you have heard of; (and you have heard of the other before;) that stands in investing and possessing the soul with an entire new frame of holiness. And redemption, which stands in the divestiture of the power of sin, that had introduced into it a universal irrectitude, and which is wrought out or wrought off, *eadem opera*, by the same work by which the new man or the divine image is superinduced. There is great friendliness in this: These wretched souls (saith God) they shall be slaves no longer, I will assert them into a state of liberty. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. That Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of the Redeemer and Mediator, when it makes its seizure, and takes possession of them for him, it becomes the law of the Spirit of life in them, making them free from the law of sin and death. And that is a further expression of the friendliness of the blessed God to a soul, in and about the matters that here lie under our consideration.

These are his ways with the sons of men, when he is about saving them from going down to the pit—when he hath found out a righteousness and redemption for them; or when he is showing man his righteousness that he may deliver him from that state of death and destruction into which he was continually ready to precipitate himself.

There are many more instances of this friendliness on God's part yet behind. But as to what has been thus said, let us make some reflections on ourselves. What have we found of this friendliness between the blessed God and our souls, in any such instances as these? Hath there been any such transaction set on foot between him and us? Do we find any applications have been made to our spirits, such

as we have attended to? Indeed God speaks to men inwardly, and often, but they perceive it not. He speaks, but they know not his voice that speaks to them. It is often a whispering voice, which they can easily neglect, and against which they shut and stop their ears. We are not to conclude, ergo, that he hath never made any application to us, if we have had no distinct reflections thereon. But we may conclude, if there have been any application made to us to any valuable purpose, then we have been capable of reflecting and taking notice that it hath been made; our attention hath been engaged, and we must have been brought to consider that God is dealing with my soul about the very life of it; and salvation or destruction will be the issue of the treaty, according as I now comply and co-operate (in a subordinate way) with his motions in me and upon me; or do resist them, and comply not. But how awakening should it be to us to consider that these are matters of life and death; that such a treaty with the souls of men hath this design, to invest them with a righteousness in which they may be capable of appearing safely before the tribunal of the supreme and final Judge. And we are each of us to consider with ourselves, Have I yet such a righteousness, yea or no? Such a righteousness I cannot have of myself, I must be beholden for it, it must be an imparted thing. Have I any of those characters in me by which I may conclude, or whence I may gather, that such a righteousness will be reckoned to me, will be accounted to me, and so answer the exigency of my case as certainly as if I had wrought it out myself?

Why, perhaps, though we have often heard our case thus stated, yet the thoughts of this state of our case may be rarities with many. And are there any among us that never think of any such thing, but just then when we are told of it? Do we believe ourselves to have souls made for eternity and an everlasting estate? And do we apprehend it enough for us to think of such matters as these once a week? We cannot help having some thoughts of this kind when the sound of words that import them beats upon our ears. That we cannot help. But is it enough (I say) for things that do concern us with reference to eternity, to be thought of but once a week, when we cannot help it? when things are borne in upon us, and inserted, and we have no way to keep them off, unless we would stop our ears? Is this like persons designing for eternity, and for an everlasting well-being? If I would throw away all thoughts of these matters till the next season return of hearing of these again, how do I know when my soul will be required? Sure, methinks, I should consider with myself every time I lie down, have I a righteousness about me in which I may safely lie down? To lie down this night under guilt, when I do not know but this night my soul may be required, this is desperate. Who can answer to himself his having such a resolution as this! I will neglect it, I will throw away all thoughts of it. I will run the hazard, I will try what will come of it? But if, instead of engaging our spirits in the serious thoughts of what doth so deeply concern us, there should be not only a not considering but a continual running in the course that tends to involve us in new guilt, so that the person that doth not know but the next night, or the next hour, he shall be required to surrender and give up a loathsome, guilty soul, how amazing is it that a reasonable intelligent spirit should be sunk into this pitch and degree of stupidity, so little to consider, I have a soul about me that is capable of eternity, and of eternal felicity in that state which lies before me! how amazing is it (I say) that an intelligent spirit should be so low sunk, as not to be capable of considering the difference between the pleasures of a moment and an eternity of misery and wo, if such moment be mispent in this world; and an eternity of blessedness, if it be employed, as it may be, to purposes which it is possible and capable it may?

I would leave a resolution, if it might be, with each one to consider their case. To have a righteousness that will bear me out before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge is my present and most indispensable concernment. And ergo, shall all of us go away now with the resolution, never to be at rest till we can say this righteousness is ours by friendly vouchsafement? We could never work out such a one to ourselves. But by friendly vouchsafement we find such characters to be upon us that speak his righteousness is ours. Then shall we live the rest of our time, rejoicing in the hope of that glory which is also the hope of righteousness by Jesus Christ, through faith, as the apostle calls it, Gal. v. 5.—But now I go on to add in the next place—

SERMON XXXI.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

7. THAT God doth effectually make such souls to understand, that in his return to them he will be reconciled without expecting satisfaction from them for all the injuries that they have done him. Turn they must, there is an absolute necessity of it. But he makes them understand that this their turning is not for any recompense to him. It is a friendly signification when he doth (as it were) say to them, You are lost if you do not turn, if there be not serious, unfeigned, evangelical repentance; but know that this repentance of yours is no recompense to me, it is not the thing that shall make me your friend. That cannot be, for he gives this repentance. He hath granted (it is said) to the Gentiles repentance unto life, Acts xi. 18. But it is necessary to make you capable of relishing the pleasures of my friendship, which you never can do if you do not turn to me. If your hearts still remain strange and disaffected, there cannot be a friendship between you and me. Not that your repentance signifies any thing to induce me to be your friend; but only to make you capable of relishing my friendship, and of entertaining a friendly commerce with me. As men can have no friendly commerce with one another, unless there be a mutual inclination of mind towards each other; if there be but a disinclination on one side, there can be no friendly converse.

And as much as the Gospel speaking thus, and it is the constant tenor of it, that God in being reconciled to sinners expects from them no satisfaction for their own sin, it must needs be that whenever he deals with a soul, in order to the settling a friendship between him and it, he must impress this (which is the very sum and sense of the Gospel) upon their spirits. They must be Gospelized by it; have their hearts framed according to this import of the Gospel, which is, that he never expects from a sinner satisfaction for his sin. Nay, so far from that, that it may be understood, and must be understood, if the Gospel be understood aright, for the highest affront imaginable to the Redeemer for any man to offer at making satisfaction for his own sin; yea, and the highest affront imaginable to the offended Majesty of heaven, to suppose it possible that such a wretch and worm as I can make a satisfaction to the eternal God, for having wronged him by the least wrong that I ever did him. It is to make the Majesty of heaven cheap to suppose that possible; and therefore by the tenor of the Gospel that must be the remotest thought in all the world.

It is to usurp upon and invade the Redeemer's office, 1 Pet. ii. 24. quoted from Isaiah liii. 8. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "He appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. ix. 26. And having by himself purged our sins, expiated our guilt, (for that is a grand part and a fundamental one of their wanting of that purgation,) he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having done this by himself. So that if a sinner should offer at such a thing to make satisfaction, what will he say? Dost thou touch him with thy work? This is a thing I do by myself. This is part of my sacred office; dost thou touch my work? Hands off, it belongs to me.

And it is to suppose the Majesty of heaven cheap and mean, and to suppose the Redeemer impotent, to think that the sinner should expiate his own sin and make God amends, when he hath committed this thing entirely to his

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own Son. Thus it is that he doth Gospelize the spirits of sinners, when he is designing to make them his indeed, to bring them into a state of friendship with him. That though there be most tender relentings, and deepest debasement and humiliation, and they could lay themselves even as low as hell at the foot of the mercy-seat, yet for all this, it is the remotest thing in all the world for them to imagine they can satisfy the Divine Majesty in the least, give the least satisfaction for the least offence or wrong that they have done. Therefore whereas this is the voice of the Gospel, "Turn and ye shall live," and, I expect no compensation from you for any of the injuries you have done me, you that have lived in continual neglect of me all your days, wandering from and rebelling against the God of your lives,—if you turn I will be reconciled to you freely; I will most freely forgive you; the pardon and the peace that I am ready to afford you shall cost you nothing; and whatsoever is requisite to your present safe, and future happy state, shall be without the least expense to you. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," Isaiah lv. 1. Never trouble yourselves for money, for it shall cost you nothing. Those mercies, that flow as waters from a most exuberant and abundant fountain; those gracious, those spiritful communications meant by milk and wine, these shall all stand you in nothing; you shall have all freely if you will come. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Why this is a strange way to induce men to be reconciled to God, and to become friends with him. You will say, I have offended him highly, lived long in continual neglect of him and rebellion against him; how shall I see his face? How shall I hold up my head before him? What shall I render to him by way of recompense? Shall it be thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Alas! I cannot command them, and they would signify nothing if I could. If this whole world were mine, and I could make it one flaming sacrifice to his offended wrath and justice, it would avail nothing. Oh! to have any such objection seasonably and aptly obviated! Why all that you need, it shall be given without price. Without price! what, such precious things as I need, and must have, or I must perish? Yes, be they never so precious. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Do not think it will reach but to a few. Be they never so many, it is a ransom of sufficient value. "He gave himself a ransom for all, (see 1 Tim. ii. 6.) to be testified in due time." That is, he offered so full a ransom, that if there were never so many to be saved, there needs no addition to the value of the ransom. And none can fall short of being saved, for that reason, because the ransom was too little, because it would not answer the exigencies of the case. That can never be objected.—"To be testified in due time." I rest on that passage, too faintly rendered, and so as to hide us from the true and full significancy of it; "he gave himself a ransom, a testimony;" there is no more than so; which being read as a parenthesis, those words (in due time) are connected with the former, he gave himself a ransom in due time, in the proper appointed time. A testimony; yea, a wonderful testimony. Christ upon the cross! What a testimony is this of the reconcileableness of God to sinners! What pretence hath the unbeliever, or any heart, against the speakingness and significancy of this testimony? When you see Christ dying, and Christ a ransom to redeem sinners by a reconciling sacrifice, is not that a sufficient testimony of the Divine good will? You see this in far lower instances: he did not leave himself without witness, when there was no more to be seen of his kindness, propension, and good will to men, but giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons. But, oh! what a witness is this, when he gives his Son to die as a ransom upon the cross! when he is set forth (as the expression is) "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," Rom. iii. 25. A mighty testimony to the grace of God, and a mighty testimony against the unbelief of men. He gave himself a ransom; and here was the testimony that God is ready to receive returning sinners, and to be reconciled to them without any price paid by them. Having such a ransom, such a price paid down already for them; so that now, sinners, whoever you are, that live under the Gospel, you have not this pretence left against making haste to be reconciled unto God—"I have highly offended him, I have wronged him; I can make him no recompense, no satisfaction." This is to add wickedness to your sin, to think of making him a satisfaction. He never leaves that upon you; you have not that to say against returning presently, and falling with a broken heart at the footstool of the throne of grace. You are not to insist upon this; it would be wickedness to stand upon it, to think of making him satisfaction. No, you have nothing to do, but only to fly to him for mercy, implore his mercy, be at his foot; there will be peace between him and you. He is willing to be reconciled, and it shall cost you nothing. And then lastly as to this former head, in the 8th place,

8. He thus at length brings about actual covenanting between himself and the sinner. That covenant into which they enter is a covenant of reconciliation, a covenant of peace, a league of amity, in which they take him for their reconciled God, through Christ the great Mediator of this covenant, and give up themselves as reconciled ones to be of his people. He brings them to this, desists not, gives not over the treaty with such as do believe to righteousness and salvation, till matters be brought to this issue and result. A covenant is struck between him and them. The sinner seeing this state of the case, I must perish if I do not turn; if I do turn, reconciliation and pardon and acceptance with God will cost me nothing, I shall have all freely; then I have no more to say, but to resign and say, Lord, I take thee for my reconciled God; I give up myself to thee as a reconciled one, to be of thy people. Here is the issue and result of things between God and sinners. Then, when he is dealing with them, in order to the producing of that faith in them, upon which they are justified and saved. . . . . Now the state of friendship is settled, and all things are concluded between him and them by a solemn covenant. "Now (saith he) I have the sinner reduced and under bonds, safe and happy bonds, I am content to be under bonds myself to him; at the same time I require him to be bound, I bind myself. I will be a God to thee, though thou hast been an offending creature." And so the poor soul it hath no more to do but to accept God for his God, and to resign himself to him as a reconciled one, to be of his people. Now, I say, the state of friendship is settled by all this between God and the sinner; and being so, there are sundry other great expressions of friendship consequent upon the settlement of this state. As,

1. That God takes possession of such a one as his own. He takes an entire possession of him. Now thou art mine; not in right and title only as thou wast before, and as all the creation is, but mine by consent, mine by covenant; mine by claim, and thy own solemn act indeed. He accordingly takes possession of the soul as his own; comes in upon it with the fulness of that Spirit that designs here to fix his abode, and vouchsafe its constant inhabiting presence.

I told you, before, the distinction between the Spirit's visiting and the Spirit's dwelling; and, if you will, of its building and its inhabiting. In all the former work it did visit, and it was a building preparing for itself. Whatsoever was done or wrought in the soul in all the fore-mentioned kinds, it was all the work of that Spirit approaching the soul, and forming it for the purposes for which it was designed. And being so prepared and formed, now it comes and inhabits the soul so prepared and brought into such a state by the Spirit: for it is now its temple. It is become a temple. He was to build first; he finds all in ruins and rubbish; the ruins of an old temple. But now there is a new fabric erected. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16. In whom we are builded together, that is, in Christ; in whom the foundations are laid of this temple, and who is himself the original temple, replenished with the fulness of God. "Destroy this temple, (meaning his body,) and in three days I will raise it up again." Here, I say, was the original temple, and the model and platform of that temple, which every regenerate person becomes upon union with him. All are brought as so many

lively stones to that "living corner-stone, and so built up a spiritual house," 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. And so that, "In whom ye are also builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit," Ephes. ii. 22. Here, ergo, now the Holy Ghost is to dwell—a mighty friendship! I will have my very Spirit be in you. "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. I will put it into you, so that there it shall have a fixed abode. Hereby we know that he dwelleth in us and we in him, by the Spirit that he hath given us. This is the mutual indwelling which speaks the nearness of the union, and is indifferently expressed by God's dwelling in us and our dwelling in him. We could know nothing of this, but by the Spirit in its vital and discernible operations. By the Spirit that he hath given us, (which is an active, powerful principle in us,) we know that he dwells in us and we dwell in him; it speaks itself by efforts that may be felt, that are most perceptible. And,

2. He hereupon holds a continual communion with such souls: that is it for which he will dwell with them by his Spirit, in order to constant converse; as they that cohabit can converse together more freely and more constantly than others. Indeed, cohabitation is not fully expressive of this case, of this mutual inhabitation, which comes a great deal nearer; so that the conversation that can be between them who inhabit in the same walls, and under the same roof, is too defectively expressive of vital communion, that living intercourse which is between God and such souls: for as he doth inhabit by his Spirit, he converseth by his Spirit. This fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, but by the Spirit, called the communion of the Holy Ghost. Compare 1 John i. 3. with 2 Cor. xiii. 14. That fellowship which believing souls are said to have with the Father and with the Son, is called the communion of the Holy Ghost: the immediate agent between the blessed God, Father and Son, and the soul, that must move and work towards him. And so this communion is not like that between men and men, be they never so near and never so dear to each other, never such friends; they cannot converse but by words or by external signs and tokens. But here is an immediate converse of spirit, a vital converse; the Holy Spirit moving the soul inwardly, and making it move under its motions back again towards God in Christ: for God is not to be conversed with otherwise than in his Christ. And so the matter differs as to this sort of operation by the renewed soul, from the operations that are exerted and put forth in it, by way of preparation and introduction unto this state of friendship; for in those the soul is but passive, barely passive, it is wrought upon; but now it comes to be active; it is so acted upon as to procure a continual re-acting, and it is so in every gracious act. Such is the vouchsafement of grace on God's part, and such the exigency of the case on the soul's part, that there shall not be one act but, saith God, I will have a hand in it. He mingles with the renewed spirit in every gracious act that this communion speaks. As it is in playing on a musical instrument, there is no string that sounds untouched, and every string as it is touched; here is action and re-action throughout; so it is in this communion between God and the soul through Christ and by the Spirit.

Here is the greatest friendliness imaginable on his part to bring it about and procure that a soul which was alienated from him, and a stranger and disaffected to him, which chose to live at the utmost distance from him, now acts all in God. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be manifest, that they are wrought in God," John iii. 21. There are such works, such motions, such modencies, such suspirings in the soul, as speak him to be the author; as carry their own proof, their own evidence in them, that they are wrought in God. Men would be no such thing if God were not in the matter. But O! what friendliness is this, that he will procure that there should be such a converse, such an intercourse; his own blessed Spirit mingling with the spirit of a poor soul, which he hath now put his own impression upon, and gives his vital formative touch unto.

3. His friendship appears upon all this, that now he taketh all due care of their growth, of their improvement in all spiritual excellencies. He takes continual care, I say, of their growth, all due care, all that it befits and becomes him to take. And you must know, that his friendliness in this thing is not to be estimated merely by the success, by their actual discernible growth and improvement; because his care and his agency must be suitable to the subject. This the divine decorum doth require, that his agency should be suitable to the subject, and the subject must be considered as an intelligent subject. And, ergo, how are such to grow? They are not to grow as the lilies of the field, not to grow as the grass and trees grow, without any thing of care and concern. Indeed, we are directed by our Saviour, in reference to our external concerns, to be void of all perplexing care, considering how the lilies of the field grow without it. But there is no such thing directed with reference to our souls and spiritual concernment. But we are there put upon seeking and striving to the very utmost. Seek first the kingdom of God, principally, with all the intentions of your souls. That kingdom of God, which in its first and inchoate state must be within us, that we are to intend and take care of, and to labour every day to have our spirits near, and more cultivated and wrought into a compliance with, and subserviency to, the laws and rules of that kingdom: this must be our business. Our souls ought to be a garden, a paradise, which we are to till and cultivate, and to take a continual care of. Therefore, I say, that the friendliness that is to be seen in the care of God for our growth, is not to be estimated merely by our discernible growth, but several other ways. As,

1. By the kindness of his design: he designs our spiritual increase. And,

2. By the aptness of the means that he useth thereunto, both internally and externally.

(1.) Internally. He hath implanted vital principles capable of growing, capable of improving, a new life, a new nature, whose tendency is to perfection.

Natura intendit perfectissimum. It is a universal law, concerning all nature, that it ever intends that which is most perfect. And certainly the new nature is not most unnatural, it is not the least of all natural; it doth not deviate from and fall below the rules of universal nature. He hath implanted principles which naturally tend to perfection, and that affords continual influences to co-operate with, and cherish those principles from that Spirit; from which it is possible he may retire, may be grieved, and so infer miserable infeeblements and languishments upon the deserted soul, deserted in a degree, and deserted for a time. And,

(2.) He affords the most suitable external means. The sincere milk of the word is to be received for that very purpose, that we may grow thereby; and we are directed continually to supplicate and draw down by believing, by the exercise of that principle of faith, influences from above that may cherish all the rest, and to have that faith exercised and breathing in all the external duties and acts o worship, which from time to time are to be performed. And herein there is a great appearance and demonstration of God's friendliness towards regenerate souls. He so far takes care of their growth, doing what becomes and befits the wisdom of a God to do in his dealings with intelligent creatures, reasonable spirits now inspired from himself, and planted with new principles from above; yea, and in this matter his friendliness must be owned to appear,

(3.) In the very rebukings themselves, which he gives, when, through slothful neglect, languishings do ensue. For we must know, that such decays as are consequent upon the Spirit's being grieved, and retiring and withdrawing in a degree, are at the same time faults and chastisements. If my spirit languisheth, be faint and feeble, this is a defect,—the want of that spirit and liveliness that should be in me, and, ergo, blameable. But it is corrective also; "thine own backslidings shall reprove thee," Jer. ii. 19. See now, "that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken me," that thou hast withdrawn thyself, that thou hast retired and neglected me: "thy own backslidings shall reprove thee." And then,

(4.) The friendliness that appears in that care which God takes of our spiritual growth, is seen in the excellency of the plant that is to grow, or whose growth or improvement he takes this care of. And what is that? A divine and

heavenly principle, and all additional degrees, by the accession whereof it is said to improve and grow. They hold to the kind, they are congenerous, and are of the same kind. So that if there be growth, there is always a suitable communication from heaven, from God, which is in its own kind and nature a divine and heavenly thing. That grace which is to grow, is a heaven-born thing; a thing born of God. It is God's own production; yea, it is his very image; for the creation is his production—he hath made all things. But this is a production of his own image, his very likeness. The new man is created after God. He is himself at once the author and exemplar of this work and production. Eph. iv. 24. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," Coloss. iii. 10. God is now introducing his own image into the soul, when he is new-creating it. And this is a work not to be done in the dark; it "is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Now, (as if he should say, I am now going to raise up a new creation in a dark, dead, ruined, desolate, forlorn soul: it is a glorious work I am about, let it be beheld, let it come into the light. I will have the soul itself know what I am doing upon it: it is renewed in knowledge, a light shining upon the soul, by which it may perceive that God is bringing in upon it his own likeness. Mighty friendliness this is. As it is often a way wherein a man expresses his kindness to his friend, by giving him his picture, so doth God express his friendliness, gives his picture, and gives it so inwrought into the soul itself. Wherever thou goest, I will have thee carry my picture, even in thy breast. Great friendliness. And this is an image that can grow; for it is a living image, not a dead show. It is a vital image that is capable of improvement, and growing liker and liker, and still of growing liker and liker, as the image is. "By beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. What a mighty friendliness is this! But then I should come, in the fourth place, to show,

4. What friendliness he expresses towards the soul, upon its backsliding, after all. How graciously he recalls the backsliding soul, and what his workings towards it are herein and hereupon. But methinks the hearing of all this should set many a heart on work among us. Oh, who would not have such a friend? Who would want such a friend, if he be to be had? If friendship with him be a possible thing, oh, why should I live upon earth without it? They are dark and gloomy days wherein generally men go from morning to night, and know nothing of this friendly converse with him. Oh, why should not my soul be open to the entertainment of such a friendly overture? Why should not I fall in with it? Why should such a day be lost to me? Why should such a day as this be past over? the day of treaty betwixt the blessed God and wretched souls. Why should I lose such a day, and not be immediately and out of hand taken into this blessed state of friendship with God, and give up myself absolutely and entirely to him? But now to proceed:

SERMON XXXII.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

4. It is a further expression of friendliness on God's part, towards these believing ones, that when they wander and backslide from him, he recalls them and recovers them—takes a course for their reducement—will not let them go so as at length to lose them, by not using the most apt and fit means for their recovery and final salvation. How often is his voice heard crying out, "Return, return, ye backsliding children." How full of affection to this purpose are there many verses in Jeremiah iii. Pleading, striving with backsliding wanderers, that they would return. Indeed it is such an aggravation to the sinner, as it might make it astonishing to us, that such as have been treated with such kindness and friendliness as doth appear in all the fore-mentioned instances, should yet be so prone to backslide and deviate. How might it confound us to think that such a spirit should be in us, that no enticements, no endearments, will stay or hold us in with this our great and blessed friend, but that we should still be so apt to make excursions. What with convictions we have continual reason to discern, and with sorrow and shame to confess in this kind, is what we find in the word of truth, and in the sacred records often. "My people are bent to backslide from me," Hosea xi. 7. A people that might call themselves his, and whom he calls his, that there should be such a bent in them, not a weak inclination only appearing now and then, and usually overcome, but a stiff and steady bent, as the expression signifies: this is very amazing. And that there is a continual bent and proneness this way, the apostle's caution to Christians doth too plainly signify. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God," Heb. iii. 12. They who believe have still reason to say, "Lord, help our unbelief." They who have that for the nature and kind of it which was the faith of Abraham, and whereupon God imputes righteousness to him, they are not throughout always of his practice, do not constantly walk by that faith. Though that faith, in the nature and kind of it, was spoken of as so common to him with all believers, that it is designedly represented and held forth to us, as neither confined to the circumcision nor to the uncircumcision. And, ergo, so mighty a stress is laid upon this thing, that he had this upon which God judged him righteous before he was circumcised; that so it might be understood that this faith, and the justifying, saving effects of it, were not confined to the Jew or Gentile, but common to believers of both sorts by the same faith; God justifying the circumcision and uncircumcision too, through the same faith, as you find Rom. iii. 30.

But this faith hath its remission, (as to degree, and as its exercise,) its great and sinful intermissions; for all intermissions of acts are not sinful; but there are sinful intermissions too of the exercise of faith very frequently, and then what is the issue and effect? Departing from the living God, backsliding, drawing off from God, as faith is a coming to him. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Believing is coming; disbelieving, not believing, ceasing to believe, that is departing from him—going off. Take heed of "an evil heart of unbelief," which lies in that departure from the living God.

But as that is indeed on their parts a most unfriendly thing, oh, how friendly is it, that, when they depart, he calls after them, "Whither are ye going?" Rather might he have said, and with infinitely higher reason, "Be gone then. Will you be gone?—then depart for ever." I say with higher reason, than he who once said somewhat like it. It is said of that morose philosopher, (who was wont to be called the Cynic,) that his servant Manes was leaving him, withdrawing himself from him, and was gone. Some of his friends would have had him send after him, to have reduced him. 'Fetch him back? No, (saith he,) that is a mean, that is a turpid action. It is very mean and dishonourable (saith he) that Manes should think that he could live without Diogenes, and Diogenes should not live without Manes: never send after him.' Oh! with how infinitely higher reason might God have said so. "That is mean, that they should think they could live without me, but I cannot live without them. If they will be gone, let them go." But he doth not do so; and, ergo, you may understand it is pure friendliness towards them, that when they are departed and gone, he ever calls after them; that he should direct his proclamation to be made in such cases. Go and proclaim these words, "Return, return, O ye backsliding children," as it is in Jeremiah iii. That he should insist upon it, urge and inculcate it, as he doth. You have the same thing again, Hosea xiv. 1. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen

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by thine iniquity,—I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him," ver. 4. How gracious an invitation doth he send after such as are backsliders, revolted and gone, to return and come back again. He orders that they "shall hear a voice behind them, a word (as Isa. xxx. 21.) saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." As if he should have said, Alas! you mistake your way, whither are you going? This is the right way. You are going away from your God;—you seem most dangerously to mistake your way, when you are going to the right hand, or going to the left hand. This is not your way to God, and to rest, and blessedness, and peace, and a finally good state. And by many media, and sometimes immediately, he causeth, and he maketh such a voice to be heard, "a voice behind them," or that shall, some way or other, reach their ears, and reach their hearts. Sometimes he takes care that they shall meet it in the Bible; drops a word into their minds, which they have heretofore read, or providentially puts it under their eye. How many such seasonable voices have there been to poor wanderers, that if they have taken up this Book (and sometimes it may be very carelessly, and without design) they have met with a passage that hath struck them. I am out of the way, I must go back to my God again. Sometimes they meet with it in a sermon; sometimes in the conversation of a pious friend; sometimes in a providence, in an affliction, a loss, a sickness, a pain. Sometimes stroke comes upon stroke, in such kinds: and if they will wander in by-paths, God hedgeth up the way with thorns, and they are constrained to retreat and go back: they can find no other way but to return. It is the world, commonly, that insnares and entices away men's hearts from God, that he imbitters to them. And sometimes they meet with so great losses in worldly respects, that thereupon they begin to say, Why at this rate I may lose all, sure it concerns me to ascertain to myself somewhat that cannot be lost. And the effect is sometimes such that they must say, If I had not that loss, I had lost myself. If I had not lost such and such a part of my estate, in all likelihood I had lost my soul, that was going.

God hath by such a means reduced me, recovered me, made me bethink myself. I must make sure of my relation to God, of a portion in God, or be ruined for ever. But whatsoever the means be, there is wonderful kindness and friendliness in the thing.

Sometimes this voice comes more immediately. And indeed if it do not so, he doth afford media; if he by these doth not himself work the effect and touch the heart, it is never brought about. He speaks inwardly by his Spirit, striving by that; striking the soul by convictions, rousing it by terrors; and when it is seasonable allures it, and by pleasantness and sweet relishes of better things than they can gain by their wanderings. And then also he sets conscience on work, and makes that to fall out and fight with themselves, and they are engaged in soliloquies and in discoursing and debating the matter with their own souls. What shall I get by this course of wandering, to which I seem to have indulged myself a liberty? what will come of it? He makes their own hearts and reins to instruct them in the night season, and then to commune with themselves on their bed, and be still, in great silence, to discourse and reason the matter with their own souls; and so one way or other reduceth and calls back the poor wanderer. Oh how great is the friendliness of all this. And then,

5. It is great kindness and friendliness, when they do return, and are reduced, that he so freely forgives them; that he pardons so copiously, so plentifully. As there is plenteous forgiveness with him, he is ready to multiply pardons beyond what they can have the confidence many times to ask; that when they must upon occasion, and when their hearts are touched with a lively sense of their own disengenuous dealings, when they come to present and prostrate themselves before the mercy-seat, they must be in such postures as that holy man—"I blush, I am ashamed, I am confounded, and not able to lift up my face before thee." He is in this case more ready to forgive than they can be to ask forgiveness. Not unto "seven times, but unto seventy times seven." They would be soon ashamed to ask at that rate. And when they are convinced thoroughly, and in good earnest, they are very unapt to forgive themselves as God is apt to forgive them. And indeed he is so much the more ready to forgive, by how much the less apt they are to forgive themselves. Self-loathing, self-accusing, self-abhorrence; they are the best part of the claim that they can make to forgiveness; to say, that to them belongs shame and confusion of face, but to him righteousness. As to any thing that is in them, or can have place there, there is nothing that hath more an aspect and look towards forgiveness from God, than their severity towards their own souls. They think with themselves, taking measure (as they are too prone to do) of God's greatness by their own littleness, of his immense goodness by the narrowness of their own spirits; and what they find their own inclinations to be towards others that offend them, implied by that question of Peter to our Lord, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but until seventy times seven," Matt. xviii. 21, 22. On hearing this, the disciples say altogether, "Lord; increase our faith," Luke xvii. 5.

We do not know how to conceive of so large and so copious a forgiveness, or promise to forgive, as this, Lord, increase our faith, if such a thing as this be looked for from us. We know not how to comprehend it. So much more incomprehensible and inconceivable is that readiness to forgive which resides in the fountain, in him who is the Father of all mercy, and of all compassion, and who hath made himself known by the name of "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Men do not know how to conceive this of God, and ergo reason thus with themselves, I should not know how to forgive another offending me so oftentimes. Alas! saith God, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than yours, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isa. lv. 8, 9. They are apt to measure God by their span and inch. As the distance is, and infinitely more, between heaven and earth, "and as far as the east is from the west, so far he removeth our transgression from us." It is in the same context we are told he multiplies to forgive, or he abundantly pardons: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," or will multiply to pardon, that is the emphasis of the Hebrew expression. But how can this be understood, that God should pardon so numerous, so multiplied transgressions as ours? Why ergo, those words come in, My ways are not as your ways, &c. Indeed if any should think hereupon to turn this grace into lasciviousness, that is to turn themselves quite out of it. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14. These are inconsistent terms, to be under grace and under the dominion of sin. Most certain it is (as hath been told you before) that God doth impart the righteousness and the sanctifying Spirit of Christ together, never separately. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. If any should say in their own hearts, Now I may sin freely, grace will abound. Let us sin, because grace abounds, or that it may abound. "God forbid (saith an apostle.) How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 2. To reason so is to reason yourselves quite out of all interest in grace at all. To leave yourselves nothing at all. Because that grace is in those streams and communications of it inseparable from itself. That is pardoning grace, and renewing, sanctifying grace, they run together *pari passu*. And God justifies none in their rebellion. I will pardon you; I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely. Only acknowledge thine iniquities, Jer. iii. 12, 13. and thence to the 19th verse. Here you have God pleading with himself on the behalf of these backsliding ones, what he shall do with them. How shall I put thee among the children? How shall I ever look upon thee as a child more? Why, saith

he, thou shalt call me "My Father," and not turn away from me. How shall I do this? Why, I have but this one way, to do it inwardly, to touch their hearts. How shall I ever treat you as children again? Why, I tell you the truth, I must inwardly prompt you to betake yourselves to me with inward, child-like, filial humiliation, contrition and repentance, so as to make you own me for your Father with relenting, tender, broken hearts. Then I shall assign you the pleasant portion among the children, not disinherit you, not put you out of the family. But these works of grace must be carried on towards you conjunctly, or not at all. Therefore, that soul which remains under the power of sin reigning in it, and wherein it hath a throne, that soul hath nothing to do with pardoning mercy, while this is his case; for he hath nothing to do with pardoning mercy out of Christ. And if he be in Christ, then Christ is made unto him "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 2 Cor. i. 30. But again,

6. Friendliness appears towards those that have made a defection, and in great degrees gone off from God, that he doth not (while it is but in such degrees) withdraw his Spirit. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me," says the penitent Psalmist, Ps. li. 11. "and cast me not out of thy presence." The Spirit is all this while not yet gone; it doth not desert them. It hath formed such into habitations for itself; "made them habitations for God through the Spirit," Ephes. i. 11. Temples they are of the Holy Ghost. He will let it appear that he is not easy to remove; not apt to withdraw and quit his habitation, and to make a sacred habitation or temple desolate. Ergo, prays the Psalmist, "O do not take thy Spirit from me, nor cast me out of thy presence!" The Spirit was not totally withdrawn, even as to his sense; he apprehended it to be with him still. When he saith, "take it not away," he apprehended he then had it; and when he saith, "cast me not away from thy presence," he apprehends himself to be in God's presence; I am yet with thee. And yet there was a seemingness, a look, an aspect, in the present state of things between God and him, as if he was about to cast him out, according to "O do not cast me out of thy presence!" that's death, that's deadly to me. Oh! he dreaded to be cast out; but at the same time he apprehends himself not cast out, according to that in Ps. lxxiii. 23. "Nevertheless I am still with thee; thou holdest me with thy right hand." "I am ever with thee," saith he in one place; and saith in the other, "cast me not out of thy presence." And lay this together, and they carry this signification and sense with them, that the hand which seemed to thrust, held at the same time. The hand (I say) that seemed to throw them away, it held them to him at the same time.

And such semblances there are between friends, when on the one part there is occasion given to resent unkindness; one may thrust at such a one, as if one would have him be gone, yet hold at the same time, as loth to let him go. And again,

7. This friendliness further appears in the same case in the recomposing of the frame of your spirits, when all was miserably shattered and discomposed. In the wanderings of such, they waste their strength: they fall and break their bones. All things are put out of frame with them. Oh! what kindness it is to recompose that shattered frame! It comes to this sometimes, that Christ is to be formed again in the soul, as in that, Gal. iv. 19. "Of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." The work of the new creation is (as it were) to be done over again. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," Ps. li. 10. Here is more creating work to be done again, new creating work to be done. Not as if there were nothing left, as though there were no residue; but there is much to be done *de novo*. "I create the fruit of the lips peace, peace." Whatsoever is to be produced out of a foregoing state of nonentity, this must be still creation. This heart was become unclean; there must be a cleanness now wrought in it by creation. "Create in me a new heart." The frame of my spirit was all wrong—"renew a right spirit within me," saith the Psalmist.

And how much of friendliness is there in this. The backslidden, wandering soul hath, in its departure from God, put all out of joint and frame; every thing is amiss. The heart was inwrapt in darkness, and he enlightens, and with his beams penetrates that darkness. It was dead, and he quickens it. It was grown a vague heart, and he makes it serious. A hard heart, and he molifies it, softens it again, makes it tender. The conscience was stupified, but he awakens it to the work and business of its office. Love was grown cold, he makes the fire glow again. Desires faint and languid, they become now strong and vigorous. The soul was grown terrene and worldly, thinking to compensate and make up to itself out of this world what it had lost in God, and in his communion, and in the enjoyment of his Christ, and so was fallen into a friendly treaty with God's enemy. "Know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity with God?" He opportunely breaks this league, renders this world again a contemptible thing, brings the poor soul to overcome it. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world," gets it under his feet, triumphs over it; so that the soul is enabled to say, What a vile, despicable thing is all this world, to become (as it were) the competitor and rival of the great God, for an opposite and a ruling interest in my heart and soul!

This is wonderful kindness, to recompose the frame of the soul when all is out of course. He finds the poor creature wounded, and he heals the wound; doth the part of the good Samaritan, pours in wine and oil; when the wretched creature was fallen among thieves, got into bad company, and there wounded and broken, maimed, and made miserably decrepid, he heals all. If you turn I will heal your backslidings. "Heal my soul that hath sinned against thee," saith the Psalmist, Psalm xli. 4. I am sensible of wounds, bruises, and broken bones; heal my soul. Experience makes such say as they come, "Let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up," Hosea vi. 1. This is still great friendliness. And,

8. When it is most seasonable, he restores them peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; "the joy of his salvation," which the Psalmist supplicates for in that penitential Psalm li. And,

9. He helps them in conflicts all along. Their life is to be a continual conflict. This is friendly to stand by them when they are in conflicts with flesh and blood, and conflicts with principalities and powers. "Satan hath desired to have you," saith our Saviour, speaking directly to Peter, but in the plural number, Luke xxii. 31. "but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He would have you; Satan hath a mind to you, he covets you; but I have prayed. God hath put these believing ones out of doubt concerning his kind propensions towards them in reference to this case of their being tempted, by this, that he hath set over them "a merciful and faithful High Priest, who himself having suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 17, 18. and ch. iv. 15, 16. And in the last place,

10. This friendliness appears on God's part in introducing them at last into the heavenly society, who are all to be associated with himself and his Christ for ever. He enables them to overcome, and they then must sit down with him upon his throne. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years," Rev. xx. 6. This is great friendliness indeed, that can never be satisfied, but with eternal converse, to be everlastingly of the same society. Then those that were of Abraham's faith, with those other great worthies that we find mentioned together often, and particularly in Hebrews xi. are all now gathered to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, where all these friends are to be entertained together in one society. This is an agreed thing, and the known and declared pleasure of God and Christ; a matter concerted between him and his Son." I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am in glory." And he tells us elsewhere, he is always heard; ergo, the matter is agreed between him and his Father. So that this faith, upon which persons are counted or called (as Abraham was) the friends of God, who do believe as he did, doth not only now justify, but finally

save. And that indeed ought to compose our minds, and lessen the wonder with us, when we find that God is so frequently gathering and drawing up, one after another, out of this world of ours, divers from among ourselves, gone into the bosom of the earth, and into Abraham's bosom, being believers with Abraham's faith, and now got into possession of the same blessedness that he hath been so long possessed of. Let us all wait: God will gather us up all in time. For those who have lived by this faith, they are all designed to one and the same state. They must be for ever together with the Lord; and ergo, we ought to comfort our own hearts, and to comfort one another, (as the apostle concludes, 1 Thess. iv.) with these words; "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

SERMON XXXIII.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

Now we have spoken of the former part of God's friendliness towards believers; and in reference thereto we have considered this friendship objectively and passively. Abraham was called the friend of God; that is, one towards whom God did express a great deal of friendship. We are now to consider this friendship subjectively on our part, as that whereof we are the subjects, if we be believers; and to consider what appearances there are in the exercise of such a faith of a friendly mind towards God.

What hath formerly been noted to you, must still be remembered, that there can be no true friendship between God and man, but with the reservation of the order of superiority and inferiority between him and us; for such friendship as shall be inconsistent with that, we must still reserve this always in our thoughts, that he is infinitely above us; and we are upon all accounts most inconsiderable, mean, and little, (next to nothing,) in comparison of him; that he is a friend to us, as he is all-sufficient, infinitely full, and self-communicative; but that our friendship towards him is such as belongs to indigent, craving, necessitous, empty creatures, that can at best only be brought into an aptitude to receive and take in his communications. And indeed that faith is the receptive principle upon which Abraham was said to be accounted righteous.

This must be always remembered; and being so, then I say such friendliness towards God as can consist with our state, and with a state of things between him and us, doth eminently appear in many great indications, in or about the exercise of that faith towards him, upon which he justifies, and is finally to save.

There appears to be much of a friendly mind towards him in this matter upon this account, that the world is so generally obdured and set against God by infidelity; so that such a faith in him is a very singular thing in the world. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" as the complaint is, Isa. liii. 1. when the design was to give a representation of the Son of God in his descent into this wretched world of ours, and that low and mean state of humiliation which he submitted himself to here, when he became a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. Here is a report to be made of these things unto the world. But who believes our report? Where shall we find those that will believe or regard it? We speak every where to deaf ears, and represent these matters to blind eyes; hearts obdured and shut up in unbelief. But where any eyes and ears are opened, hearts made attentive and flexible, though this be of God's own promising, he looks upon it with a kind eye. Well, now I find then there are some among men that are not so under the power of a vicious prejudice, but they can hear and receive what is reported and revealed to them about those great and glorious things which the Gospel contains. "They have not all obeyed the Gospel," as the apostle speaks, Rom. x. 16. referring to and quoting this passage, Isa. liii. 1. "For Esaias saith, who hath believed our report?" We may go whither we will, and scarce can find any one who believes what we say, though we speak the greatest and most glorious things, things of the most pressing necessity and highest importance to the persons themselves to whom we speak. If there be here and there some in a corrupt and degenerate world that will give ear and any regard to what is spoken from heaven in the name of the Lord about the great concernments of souls, these are the persons that have found favour in his eyes; he looks upon them with a kind eye, as he did upon Noah in such a corrupt state of things. "Thee have I found righteous before me." Therefore, for thee I am resolved there shall be an ark prepared, that thou mayest be so far subservient to that design of thine own preservation, as to be employed in preparing that ark. And whence came it that he did so? It is referred to his faith. "By faith he being warned of God, and moved with fear, prepared the ark, to the saving of his house." Whereas ergo, it is said, Gen. vii. 1. "Thee have I found righteous before me in thy generation." I will take care of thee; thou hast borne a friendly mind towards me, and I will do the part of a friend towards thee. I say, wherein this is said, we find wherein this faith stood. Wherein it was (*i. e.* in reference to the productive principle) that Noah did come to approve himself one that bore a just mind towards God. It is referred all to this principle, and resolved all into this as the productive principle, to wit, "that Noah would believe God," would take the word of God when no one else would; "all flesh having corrupted their ways;" for it is said, "he being moved with fear, and warned of God, prepared an ark." There was the same previous warning given to the generality, of God's intention to animadvert upon the wickedness of the world; and Noah was made use of as a "preacher of righteousness" to warn men hereof, to give them premonition; but nobody regards it, but he and those few of his family that were saved with him. This, in general, God looks upon as a piece of friendliness towards him, when any (though first taught and influenced by himself) do single and sever themselves out from an infidel world, and do receive the report he makes from heaven of the great things he hath designed, and hath put into a method in order to the recovering and saving of lost souls.

But this I do only pre-lay as a general. That I may more distinctly speak to this matter, I shall show you what friendliness is shown towards God in and about the exercise of this faith, the faith that will justify and save in such things as, 1. Faith doth suppose, 2. Such things as it includes, and 3. Such things as it infers and draws after it. Things of all these sorts will appear to have in them great indications of a friendly mind towards God; and such as are indeed the peculiarities of those few believers, in comparison, that are to be found among men.

I. Such things as this faith doth suppose. And when I speak of this faith, I especially mean that very unitive act of faith by which the soul closeth with God in Christ, and so whereupon it is mediately in a justified estate, and entitled to a final and eternal salvation. Speaking of that very act which is formally unitive betwixt God in Christ and the soul, there are several other acts that may come under the general notion and name of faith, that are among the things presupposed unto this act; and so are to be spoken to under the head of things supposed; but I shall begin somewhat lower, and at what is more remote, as,

1. The soul's listening and inquiring after God, which this believing in God must needs be understood to suppose, in an ordinary course at least. They that at length come to believe in him as Abraham did; they must be supposed, however inwardly and secretly prompted hereunto, to have made some inquiry after him first. The most content themselves to be as without God in the world: but when he hath once touched a mind with a vital touch, it begins then to rouse and stir itself. Why, what? Must it not have been some infinitely good and absolutely first Being that hath made me and all things? Why have I lived in

* Preached October 20th, 1698.

that contented, voluntary ignorance of him so long? The most are habitually "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart," as the expression is, Eph. iv. 18.—"They are willingly ignorant of God," 2 Pet. iii. 5.—"They like not to retain God in their knowledge," Rom. i. 28. It pleaseth them not, it is not grateful to them; "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. But when he secretly prompts a soul and saith to it, "Seek my face," there is immediately an answer in the heart,—"Thy face, Lord, we will seek:" we can live without God in the world no longer; this is a wearisome, gloomy sort of life. Why, then, the soul is awakened to inquire, when it saith, (what so few say,) "Where is God my maker, that giveth songs in the night?" Job xxxv. 9. Here is the first appearance of a friendly mind towards God, when the soul grows impatient of distance from him, unacquaintance with him, and ignorance of him. The most can go from day to day and have nothing to do with God; they can open their eyes in the morning, when the eyelids of the morning open upon them, and never say, Where is God?—walk all the day long, and never concern themselves with him, as if they were a sort of absolute beings, and that this were the sense of their hearts; "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee," as in Jer. ii. 31. Full of themselves, and full of the emptiness and vanity of a world made subject to vanity; and so there is no room for God, and they have no business with him. Why, when this habitual aversion so far wears off, and is counter-wrought, as that the soul begins to inquire and look out and think with itself, How came I into this world? and how came there to be such a world, when neither I nor it could be without a Maker, nor that Maker without a ruling power over all; why then, "where is God my Maker?" he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, that they might feel and find him out; and when this end in designing, and making, and sustaining such a world, and such an order of creatures in it, is so far advanced and comported with, Now, saith God, my creature begins to rouse and look after me; then, he reckons, is the first appearance of a friendly mind towards him, when souls grow impatient and say, I can live without God no longer. I pray you consider this; with such as never had to do with God, and never intend to have, all this will signify nothing; but with those that have such a design, and would fain have a friendship established betwixt God and them, these things will signify much, they will have their weight; they can weigh nothing with those whom they do not concern. But whosoever can apprehend these as my concernments, they are things that concern me, my soul, my life, my welfare, my eternal hope; with such, what I say will be considerable. And wheresoever there hath never yet been any friendly concern between God and the soul, it is high time to look after it; and if ever you will on your part, it must begin to express and show itself in such a thing as this, to wish that a solicitude be awakened in you, How shall I do to find out God, that he should have given me breath and being, that I should continually have lived, and moved, and had my being in him; and yet all this while not be seeking after him, to feel and find him out? this is the greatest enmity imaginable. And ergo, to have a contrary frame and disposition of spirit beginning to express itself, must be somewhat of friendship.

2. There is a certain friendliness towards God in this matter, in the acknowledgment and entertainment of that revelation that he hath made of himself in his word as true and divine, upon those characters and concomitant evidences of the divinity thereof appearing and manifestly offering themselves to view. To a soul that hath been stirred up to inquire and bethink itself, How shall I come to some knowledge of him that made me and made all this world, and in whom alone that satisfying goodness is to be found that will be an adequate and suitable portion and rest for my soul? When any are awakened thus to inquire and look about, and, looking about them, to see in the midst of all that darkness that doth spread itself over all this world, a collection of Divine light, shining forth as in this revelation and discovery of God in his word—Oh, how grateful is the first appearance thereof!—when the glimmerings and glimpses do shine in this discovery, this revelation of God, how grateful is it, wheresoever there is a friendly mind towards God. And if now hereupon the soul doth receive the testimony that is contained in this word, in this Scripture-revelation, this God esteems friendly. The generality of men do not receive it; this is their condemnation, that "light is come into the world, [that light which shines in the Gospel discovery,] but men love darkness" more. If any do love the light more than that darkness, though it be from God, it is nevertheless kindly accepted, and taken by him as an indication of friendliness towards him. And we are to consider to this purpose, that however there be justice in this towards God, there is nothing the less of friendliness; for that wheresoever there is justice towards men, the acts and exercises thereof signifying nothing if they do not proceed from love; for love comprehends all that duty that men own towards one another, and it is "the fulfilling of the law." If I do a just act towards a man, and do it not from a spirit of love, there is but a mere carcass of that which is really and truly a duty, the life and soul thereof are wanting. It is love that fulfils the law in the whole extent of it; love to God fulfils all the precepts that enjoin my duty towards him; and love to man, all the duties I owe to man. And ergo, do not think that is no friendship towards God to receive the discovery he hath made of himself in his word as from him, because it is right, or because it is but justice towards God; for it must be a spirit of love that must animate all the duty I do, whether towards God or towards men; else it is all worth nothing. As there is malignity and malice in infidelity, so there is love and kindness in faith; in the assenting act of faith I mean; for the unitive act (you have been told) I am to speak to afterwards; and what I am now speaking to I put in under a distinct head of things presupposed unto that. But let it be considered that the main thing that doth keep off souls from God in infidelity, (comprised even in the nature of infidelity,) is the enmity that it carries in it. How observable is the expression in John v. verses 42 and 43, compared together; "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." What is the reason of this partial disinclination to receive that testimony of God, when there is no such aversion appearing to receive and rely upon the human testimony of such at least, as are not known to have forfeited the credit of their word? What is the reason? Why, that the love of God hath no place in such hearts. They do not bear a friendly mind towards God; ergo, they can believe one another, but will not believe him; they have so much kindness for one another, that they will take one another's word; but they have so little kindness for God, that they will not take his word. A most horrid case; but yet a plain one. So it most manifestly is—"Ye will not believe my word, because the love of God is not in you." Ergo, it is a sure indication of a friendly mind towards God, when there is any aptitude to entertain that revelation he hath made of himself and his word, and to acknowledge the characters of divinity that do appear upon it, rejoicing to behold any beams of heavenly light shot down into the midst of that horrid darkness which hath spread itself over this world. But again,

3. There is yet a further and more particular appearance of such friendliness towards God, when his reconcileableness to man declared in this revelation of his, is received as a true discovery of him. When the souls of men come to entertain such notices concerning him, that though he is offended (and most justly) against a sinful world, he is yet willing to be reconciled to sinners, bears a placable mind towards them. This is that which the most will not believe. There is such ill will towards God, as seals up the hearts of men in obduration, and ergo, this discovery will not enter. It is one thing to have a notion of it in the mind, and another thing that it have its seat and place with effect and power in the heart; (for as there will be occasion more fully to discourse hereafter) there's the principal seat of that faith upon which God accounts men righteous and doth finally save them. There its principal seat is to be sought and found. Therefore, when we tell men from the word of God, and out of the Gospel of Christ, that God is willing to be reconciled to sinners, they can give us the

hearing, and give a faint assent; this notion is received into the mind (as a great many others are that belong both to the natural and prenatural parts of religion) without distilling any influence upon the heart and will. But if this discovery of God, that he is reconcileable unto sinners, once come to touch the heart, the reception and entertainment that is given it there, speaks the greatest friendliness towards God. It is with the heart that this must be believed, and the believing heart is in this point a friendly heart towards God. It is because this belief doth not obtain and take place there, that God hath so many irreconcileable enemies. They will not believe him reconcileable, and ergo, they will not be reconciled themselves. There is a consciousness, a guiltiness, which is seated in the natural conscience, that poisons the soul with enmity against God. Such a thing as was found in the spirit of Cain; "My sin is greater than can be forgiven." And what was the product of that flat aversion from God?—self-banishment. Let me get to the utmost distance from him that I can, and keep at the utmost distance;—I have offended him, there is a nemesis, a doom, a judgment that hangs over my guilty head, and he will not be reconciled. Thou saidst, There is no hope, Jer. ii. 27. What then? I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. Because men do despair of God's being reconciled to them, ergo, are they living a perpetual warfare and wilful wandering. I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. There is no hope in God that he will ever be reconciled to such a wretch as I. But if reconcileableness towards sinners be entertained, then that soul can be persuaded of it, that his word doth in this respect represent him truly. This is from the friendliness of his heart, that hopeth all things, believeth all things, and thinketh no evil.

As it is with love towards men, it doth not allow us to entertain suspicions and surmises concerning them that love us. It will not allow us to think them false, perfidious, treacherous, hypocritical. So much less will this love to God allow us to think so of him, that when he publishes his reconcileableness to sinners unto the sons of men, so expressly in a Gospel sent into the world for that very purpose, if there be a friendly mind towards God, it will never allow a man to think he will but deceive in all this; all these are but false colours, they are but deceptive disguises that he hath put upon himself to make himself look speciously, and be well thought of in that world, that he hath even now forsaken and left. A friendly mind towards God banisheth all such thoughts as blasphemies of the Divine goodness, and can allow them to have no place. And ergo, whereas his Gospel proclaims "glory to him in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men;" a friendly disposition towards him shows itself in the joyful reception of this revelation of him, as most certainly and infallibly true.

4. And this friendliness towards God further appears in the soul's deserting and coming off from this world, upon that discovery that God hath made of himself. As there is nothing can draw off a soul from a suitable good unto the sensitive nature that now prevails in the state of apostacy, and is growing in degenerate natures, nothing can draw it off from an adherence and addictedness to such a world, the sensible objects whereof are grateful and suitable to a soul lost in sense and buried in carnality, but the revelation of something greater, and better, and more suitable. And wheresoever there is faith in God, beginning to obtain and take place, by what degrees it doth take place in the soul the world loses its place; these two being directly opposite to one another, standing as rivals and competitors, God and this world. Therefore by what degrees soever the soul approacheth God, it draws off from the world. And whereas the friendship of this world is enmity to God, by how much the more the soul inclineth to a state of friendship with God, so much the more it is enmity with this world, as God's rival and competitor for the heart and soul. Under that notion it cannot endure it, but abhors from it. This friendship with God, which faith doth so directly tend to, and consist in, in so great part, must infer a continued and habitual enmity against this world, not abstractly considered in itself; (for every thing that God made is good;) but as it is now become an idol of jealousy set up in opposition to God, that doth, as it were, appear as a substituted deity put in God's room. The world and that carnality appear together, which entertains it and embraces it. They do share deity between them, which belongs only to God. Men fall into a league with this world for themselves, to gratify themselves, and their own carnal inclination out of it. But so the world and self, complicated and being in a combination, they engross the deity to themselves, which was due to the Most High. And under this notion, that when the soul begins to fall in with God, it falls out with the world; and ergo, it is expressly said in that fore-mentioned place, that the friendship of the world is eamity against God. And so friendship with God must consequently be, under that notion, enmity against the world. But this is great friendliness too, towards God, when the soul retires and recedes from all that was dear and delightful to it before on this account. Now it finds him placable, reconcileable, willing to be at peace; I may come back to my God again, he invites me, he recalls me. What have I any more to do with idols? What is that base corruptible world now to me? It abandons all that it loved, all that it took pleasure in, upon his account, and for his sake. "We have forsaken all, and followed thee," (said Peter in the name of the other disciples, Matt. xix. 27.) "what shall we have therefore?" It is not to be thought he could suppose that the forsaking their little all could deserve any thing, if it were a thousand times more than it was. But yet from the Divine goodness apprehended, it raiseth expectation. Surely there is something to be got, though we have little to lose. And if we had all the world in our power, and were to abandon and throw it away, it were a contemptible, despicable nothing, in comparison of what we expect to find in him. But yet there is an expectation raised from the immense goodness and benignity of God, that he will never permit any to abandon former enjoyments to their loss. It is a thing that in itself deserves nothing; but that doth, as it were, carry in itself a promise of much of all that can be expected and thought of, inasmuch as it hath in it a friendly mind towards God, which having to do with a being of infinite goodness, can never be without acceptance, or without its reward. Nay, by how much the more we do despise our all of this world upon this account, (and ergo, must apprehend our doing so, to have so much the less of merit in it, because the things we leave and forsake we judge at the same time to be worth nothing,) yet so much the more is there of a friendly mind in it towards God; for he is so much the higher in our estimation and affection, by how much the more any thing that is opposite is lowered and depressed there. But then,

5. The reception of that particular testimony that God hath given us in his Gospel concerning his Son, that hath peculiarly much of a friendly mind towards God. That we entertain the discovery which he makes to us of his Christ, the immediate object of that unitive act of faith which comes next to be spoken to. But this must be previous and supposed to it; *i. e.* that we receive the discovery that God hath made of Christ. This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased, I recommend to you, hear him as one sent forth from me. The voice came from the excellent glory giving this testimony concerning the Son of God. Now as the rest of the world who have this revelation, but believe it not, do by their unbelief make God a liar, they that do believe this testimony set to their seal that God is true: this he takes as an expression of friendliness towards him. The rest of the world they are in a conspiracy, a confederacy to make him thought a liar, that he treats them with deceit. This notion of him men do so propagate as that it insinuates into their hearts, though in their minds they have no formal notion of it; they carry it towards him, as if they took him to be a deceiver, an impostor, one that intended to delude them by that representation, and by that scheme and model of things which he lays before them in the Gospel of his Son. But they that receive this testimony, do now give an open proof before all the world of the regard and reverence which they have to that recommendation that God hath given of his Son to the children of men. Look to those expressions, John iii. 33. "He that hath received this testimony hath set to his seal that God is true;" (where he is speaking of

the testimony given in the Gospel concerning Christ;) and that other, 1 John v. 10. "He that believeth not the Son of God, hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, (as the next verses tell us,) He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." So that he stands forth as a visible example and witness for God against the infidelity of a wicked world, that will not entertain this discovery which carries such bright lustre and glory with it, made unto men concerning his Son, and his design of saving sinners by him. This is friendly towards him, to give him the glory of his truth; and it will be matter of triumph and glorying at the great day, (as in 2 Thess. i. 10.) "When our Lord Jesus Christ shall appear with his holy angels, he shall be admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe, because our testimony was received in that day." Upon this account will he appear glorified in the eyes of men, when he hath such a remnant to produce and show before the world. Here are these that would believe me when the generality of men would not. These are they with whom my truth was a sacred and adorable thing, when it was turned into a lie by the wicked, infidel world. Here is a peculiar friendliness towards God in this remnant, when the minds of men are generally so disaffected towards him by that infidelity which carries dislike and enmity in the very nature of it.

And this leads to the unitive act of faith itself, wherein we shall show there is much of friendliness towards God and his Christ essentially included.

SERMON XXXIV.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

WE have showed what this faith doth suppose. Now we come, in the second place, to show what it doth import. And this we shall let you see by showing you, 1. What this faith doth more essentially include and denote; and then also, 2. What things it doth connate, that do go along with it, and which must come into consideration, as ordinarily this faith is to be expressed God-ward; and so will greatly heighten this friendship towards God, and represent it so much the more a generous and a glorious thing.

I. Consider as to the import of this faith what it more essentially includes and carries in it. As,

1. Such an assent to the Gospel as draws the heart along with it. That faith upon which God doth justify and save, is not a dead, inanimate thing. "It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," Rom. x. 10. Such a faith as doth not carry the heart along with it signifies nothing, doth nothing any more (as the apostle speaks in the close of this chapter) "than a carcass would do without the soul." And this matter, if it were well considered, would easily reconcile these two great apostles, which do both of them discourse so distinctly and designedly about Abraham's faith as the precedent to the whole community of believers in reference to the matter of justification. It was far from the thoughts of this apostle (as is most evident) to think that faith, be it never so lively, so active and operative, could signify any thing to procure acceptance, or cause God to look upon a believer with so much the more favourable and propitious an eye. If it be never so much a living thing, it signifies nothing, as to obtaining divine acceptance. Nor did it ever come into the mind of the other apostle, to suppose than an unactive, dead faith, would serve the turn to bespeak a man accepted with God. It is very plain this one thing agrees with them both. And it is the apostle Paul's expression, mentioned to you before, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Not that when he believes unto righteousness, his faith procures that righteousness to be reckoned to him, or that is any cause of it. But God will never clothe any such one with righteousness, whom he doth not also inspire with a spirit of faith, with a vital faith, with a faith full of vital power, that accompanies it and goes along with it. Both being from the same fountain of grace, in two distinct streams, the collation of righteousness, and the communication of faith. And these do not cause one another; but the grace of God in Christ causeth both. As when two streams go from one fountain, one stream doth not cause the other stream, but the fountain causeth both.

And it is very observable to this purpose, how joint a testimony these apostles bear to one and the same thing, in that (Acts xv. 9.) "God put no difference between Jews and Gentiles, purifying their hearts by faith." He accepts a Jew as well as a Gentile, and a Gentile as well as a Jew, without difference; makes no difference, purifying their hearts by faith. If they have such an operative faith as shall be accompanied and followed with heart purity, there shall be no difference that one was a Jew and the other was a Gentile. And it is to be considered to the present purpose, that both these apostles were in this synod at the same time; and there was nothing but the fullest consent among the holy members; all inspired by the Holy Spirit of that assembly at that time. These, indeed, were Peter's words; but you find James speaking afterwards. And Paul was sent from Antioch thither. But what was agreed there, seemed meet to the Holy Ghost and to them, as the matter is concluded and shut up. No difference was put between one and the other, a Jew and a Gentile, faith purifying their hearts. If they did agree in that, they could differ in nothing considerable besides. And God will make no difference, purifying their hearts by faith; that must make and argue this faith to be a moving, active thing in them. Stagnant waters are dead; springing waters are wont to be called living—*aquæ salientes*. It is such a faith that carries an agitation with it in a man's soul. So that whereas it is a fountain agitated by that faith, it will be a self-purifying fountain. Fountains purify themselves—standing waters do not so. This fountain it hath a self-purifying power put into it; not as if it hath this of itself, but as the Divine Spirit, moving the fountain by a vital principle put into it, purifies it; and this was the agreed concurrent sense of these godly inspired men met at Jerusalem at this time. A mighty testimony it was against that dead, spiritless faith, in which a great many place all their confidence for eternity and another world. I am a believer, and, ergo, I am safe, I am well. What a believer are you? What doth your faith do? Doth it move your heart? Doth it carry your soul with it? Is there a spirit or power of faith working in your faith? Doth it operate? Doth it transform? It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. But when any must say, My faith lets my heart lay as a dead thing still, as dead as a stone; an impure thing still,—as impure as a heap of mud;—is this, indeed, the faith upon which you will venture for eternity? A faith that effects nothing, a mere negative faith; to wit, a faith which only stands in not believing the contrary, or not disbelieving such and such things. You do not disbelieve such and such things. No more doth a brute disbelieve them. If that be all your faith, a brute may have as good a faith as you; that is, that you do not believe the contrary, or you do not believe such and such thing.

But then you are to consider what it is that faith, which avails to justification and salvation, doth believe; or what it is the belief of, as well as what sort of believing it is. That is, that representation which God makes of himself in Christ, as willing to become our God. See how he did represent himself to Abraham, when it was said, that Abraham believed God, upon which he was counted righteous. Why he tells Abraham he would make him a blessed man, make him a blessing, make all the nations of the earth blessed in him. He tells him of a seed, by which seed eminently and most principally the apostle tells us, Gal. iii. 16. was meant Christ. "Not to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." Christ, as comprehending the whole community of living believers in himself. It was such a faith, ergo, as Abraham had, as by

* Preached November 26th, 1699.

which he apprehended God in Christ, and was thereupon drawn into covenant with him. "I will establish my covenant with thee." And that covenant the apostle to the Galatians also tells us, was the covenant of God in Christ, which was but then confirmed with Abraham. Not first made; it was but confirmed when it was made with Abraham; so as that the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after it, could not disannul it. It was a covenant not to be disannulled, being a covenant of God in Christ, and, ergo, must be understood to be made from the beginning, from the first apostacy. But with Abraham it was confirmed. It was the representation of God in Christ that was the object of this faith. And this faith was a thing full of life and spirit and power, in reference to this object, God in Christ. Our Saviour himself testifies that Abraham saw his day, at that great distance of time, and rejoiced in the sight. "He saw it, and was glad." It is such a faith of this discovery of God in Christ, as doth affect the whole soul, and mightily operate to the centre of the heart itself. It is such a faith upon which God justifies and saves. But such a faith cannot but carry great friendliness in it, when it carries a man's heart towards God; and that you know is the seat of friendship. How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me? When the heart is attracted and drawn to God in Christ, here is friendship. It is carried in the very essence of this faith. It is faith that raiseth desire in the heart. Oh, that I might have this God for my God in Christ, and come into most inward union with him. It is a faith that raiseth hope in the soul; such an assent to the truth of the representation upon which the soul doth not only desire, "Oh, may I have this God for my God;" but hope too that it shall, that it may. As no doubt there were such affections raised in Abraham's heart upon that discovery which God made of himself to him. I am God, all-sufficient, walk before me, and be thou perfect, and I will establish my covenant with thee. Such a treaty, such a transaction as this, when God did thus represent himself, and the representation was believed, could not but raise such affections in such a soul. Now here is the very heart and soul of friendship in all this. All this speaks a friendly mind, a propense mind toward God in Christ. And,

2. Upon such a vivid, lively, operative assent, there ensues (as what is most essential to this faith too) an appropriation of God in Christ for ours. This is the *complexus fidei* by which it doth embrace its object. "And herein this faith works by love," Gal. v. 6. And love, you know, is the very form and essence of friendship, the vital form of friendship. It is a faith that works by love, wherewith the soul takes hold of God in Christ. We must suppose, in order of nature, desire and hope to be raised before. But now here is the entire consent of the will animated by love, and closing with the amiable object, God in Christ. What a representation is here! saith the transported soul. And nothing now remains but to take hold; for I find here is a free offer made, and if I will have this God to be mine, I may; and if I will have this Christ to be mine, I may. What remains but to accept them? Nothing is more essential in this faith, than this appropriative and acceptive act, by which we take God for our God, and receive Christ for our Lord and our Jesus." "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord (this is the imitation of the Christian course) so walk ye in him," Col. ii. 6. And again,

3. There is the soul's self-resignation carried also, as most essential in this faith. And that is the most friendly thing too that can be conceived. As there is the greatest friendliness in accepting, sure there must be equal friendliness in giving, when it is oneself delivering up oneself. When the soul accepts, appropriates this God, this Christ, falls before him, saith, My Lord and my God, it hereby comes into that vital unitive closure with him that speaks, as much as any thing can, the very heart and soul of friendly love, as hath been said. But then also, when at the same time it doth receive and give, takes God in Christ, and gives itself, delivers up itself; What? can this be the act or part, or heart of an enemy? Will I give away myself to an enemy? or to whom do I bear an enemy-mind, a disaffected mind? This can never be, I received God in Christ from the apprehension I have of the great and glorious excellencies and suitableness of the object, To as many as believe, he is precious, 1 Pet. ii. 7. So saith the soul concerning Christ, who is the immediate object of this faith. And it hath the like apprehensions concerning God, who is the final, terminative object of it. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. These do both of them equally influence this accepting and this giving. I take God in Christ for mine, because I have those high and great and honourable thoughts of God in Christ. I give myself to God through Christ, for the same reason, upon the same account, as having the highest and most honourable thoughts of them both. And in this resignation, or surrender, we are to consider that as friendliness hath the plainest part that can be, so trust and faith have an essential ingrediency hereinto. Or (which is all one) that resignation hath an essential ingrediency into such faith. For when I give up myself, with what temper of mind is it? I do not give up myself to destruction, but I give up myself in order to salvation. This resignation is in trusting or committing of ourselves. "I know whom I have believed, and that he will keep what I have committed to him to that day." That committing of ourselves speaks a most friendly mind. Would any one commit himself to an enemy, or to one towards whom he bears the heart of an enemy? And,

4. This faith doth most essentially include a heart-quieting recumbency, so far as this faith prevails. It is not in degree perfect; but we speak of the nature of it, of the kind of it. It carries with it a heart-quieting recumbency, so that the soul doth abet its own act in what it doth herein, as the mentioned expression imports. "I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed." Not ashamed, why, what room or place can there be for shame in such a case? Yes, if a man hath mistaken, if he thinks he doth the part of a fool, he hath reason to be ashamed. But saith he, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed: therefore he abets his own act in this matter. It was the wisest course that ever I took in all this world, to dispose of myself so, so to commit myself: it is a thing wherein I can justify myself to the highest, that I have made this venture. It hath not been a rash, inconsiderate act. It is not a thing I am ashamed of, I shall never repent of it. Repentance carries shame with it. Whatever act I repent of, I am ashamed of it, as having done a foolish thing, betrayed weakness and impotency of mind in what I have done. But I shall never be ashamed of this. For I know whom I have believed, that he will keep, and is able to keep too, with an engaged ability, that I have committed to him (my pledge, my depositum) against that day. Still there is in this the greatest friendliness; that I can repose myself in the faithfulness and truth of him to whom I have committed myself, and upon whom I have placed my reliance in reference to the greatest concernments that can lie upon my heart.

II. Consider as to the import of this faith. Not only what it more expressly denotes, but (as the case is) it must connote. And it doth indeed connote many great and concurrent difficulties, which render the friendliness that is in it so much the more generous and glorious a thing. As,

1. This trust is placed upon one whom we never saw, I trust to one altogether out of sight. Look to the final object, God himself; the invisible God, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. And for the intermediate object, Christ, as to the most parts and most ages of the world, hitherto unseen. Even in that time wherein he might have been seen on earth, yet to a great many Christians he had not been seen. As Peter writes to the scattered Jews, though he lived and died in their country. But they were scattered, and in a dispersion, yet he saith, "Whom having not seen, ye love," &c. A glorious thing, and speaks a friendly mind. So far to trust one I never saw, and never can see. If you were persuaded to put your trust in such and such a one that you hear of, you would say I never saw his face. Trust him! Why should I trust one I never saw? That is no argument against this trust. I will trust him (saith the believing soul) though I never saw him, nor can see him. I have such an account of him, and know so much of him in a way wherein I cannot be

mistaken, cannot be deceived, though I never saw him, nor ever expect to see him, (to wit, the invisible God with eyes of flesh,) yet will I trust in him without a suspicious, misgiving heart. Here is glorious friendliness. And,

2. Here is this in the case too—it is trusting in him when one hath offended. This makes the difficulty the greater, and so the friendliness that appears in it is the more considerable and glorious. Any body that considers will easily apprehend how hard a matter it is to trust a person you know you have offended. I know I have displeased such a one, and yet to trust him, yet to place your trust in him. This is arduous, and so speaks this friendliness of mind so much the greater a thing.

3. It is trusting him with your very souls. This is yet higher, when my own convinced conscience tells me I have offended him, I have given him the highest and greatest cause of offence imaginable, and yet I will trust him, and trust him even with my very soul—the greatest and most considerable thing I have. This is high friendliness. The trust one placeth in any one is so much the more considerable and great, as the things are greater he trusts him with. As I say I trust such a one with such a sum of money, or I trust such a one with the management of such a part of my estate, or I trust such and such commodities that I value in his hands: this argues a kind and friendly propension that you will trust him so far. When you say I dare put my life into such a man's hand, this is a great trust and great friendliness. But when it comes to this, the intrusting your very souls, this is the highest friendship that can be thought. And you have nothing else to do with your souls, you must intrust them. Men's hearts must be won to Christ thus far, that they may intrust their very souls with him. "Into thy hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth," Ps. xxxi. 5. And,

4. There is this further in the case, that you are to put your trust there only. That he is to be the only object of your trust. So that if this trust fail, you are lost. For you must not have another object of your trust. This is still the so much more glorious. Trust in him will consist with no other dependencies. It is the highest act of worship that can be performed, and it is a glory that God will not give to another. He will have no rival in his honour. It is the prerogative of Deity to be the object of trust even of the whole soul. Therefore, so much the greater thing is this trust.

5. You are to consider great humiliation, and self-abasement, accompanying this trust, which makes it so much the more generous a thing; for when you are to trust him alone, you are to distrust yourself. When you are to place a confidence in him, there must be a most absolute diffidence in yourself. I am nothing, I am vile, my own righteousness is but filthy rags. Whatsoever I might pretend to under that notion, it is all loss, and dross, and dung, in comparison of what I expect, of what I seek, and what I am to rely upon, as the apostle's expressions are, Phil. iii. 5, 6. There is the greatest submission in this trust. Observe that in Rom. x. the apostle gives the true reason why the proud Jews were so much hardened in infidelity, that they would not submit to the righteousness of God: They knew not how to submit. There was so much of submission in it to comply with God's way and method of justifying and saving sinners, that they would no way in the world comport with. Their proud hearts could not endure it. If I place my trust, my sole trust, so and so, I must nullify myself; I must diminish myself to nothing; I must throw away all hopes in myself; I must allow myself to be a lost creature, a perishing creature, one deserving and worthy to perish, and to be thrown away for ever. Why, one would not do so but towards one to whom we have a friendly mind! one may endure so to humble himself, to nullify himself towards a friend; but one would be loth to do so towards an insulting enemy, or to give him that occasion of insulting over us. And again,

6. This trust is placed upon one who will surely vindicate all inclinations to place trust any where else. He is one that I have offended, and if I falter in my trust, if I grow suspicious of him, and think of placing my trust elsewhere, he will be offended a thousand times more. He thunders out curses if I decline, if my heart prevaricate, if I lean towards any other trust. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the living God." This is a great adventure, and that which only a friendly mind would carry one to, where there is so much hazard in the case. I trust when I have offended, I trust when if I be not right and steady to my trust, I offend a thousand times more; and yet I will venture, for my heart is towards him. Nothing shall discourage me, nothing shall keep me off from him.

7. It is trust to be placed without any favourable appearances to flesh and sense; for he promiseth me nothing that will be grateful in these respects: promiseth me nothing to which my flesh and sense have an aptitude and propension, or are like to receive any gratification by. If I do unite myself with him, intrust myself unto him, list myself one of his disciples, a devotee, one given up to God in Christ what shall I get by it? He doth not promise houses and lands, or great things in this world; no such matter. But yet the believing soul will trust and unite with him, and give up itself unto him: this is great, and argues a strong propension of a friendly mind. And,

8. It is not only without such favourable appearances, but is against most formidable appearances. If I intrust myself here, and so dispose of myself, (as the disposal begins in the union of heart with God and Christ,) I expose myself, at the same time, to all that a wicked world can do against me. When I make this venture, I must venture with him upon a raging and tempestuous ocean. I have all the troubles in view that this world, and the God of this world, the usurping God of this world, can give me. I am to expect nothing but storms, and tempests, and death, on every hand. Yet the soul will believe not only without hope, (as such was Abraham's faith,) but against hope, (Rom. iv. 18.) which makes it so much the more a glorious thing. And again,

9. This trust is thus placed, notwithstanding, not only against what is feared, but against what is felt by the believing person himself, in reference to himself, and generally to the whole community of believers. He meets himself, it may be, with a great deal of affliction; yet he will trust. Rough severities of providence many times, and the appearances of an enemy, are put on. God marshals up his own terrors as the world marshals up its terrors in battle-array against him. But, saith a believing soul, "though he kill me, yet will I trust in him," Job xiii. 15. I will die at his feet; I will never leave him. Though "we are killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter," nothing shall part us, Ps. xliv. 11. quoted Rom. viii. 36—39. Though we be trodden down into the place of dragons, and covered with the dust of death, no matter for that; we will never leave thee. We appeal to him, whether he yet see an inclination in us to deal falsely with him in his covenant. No, we will run through a thousand deaths for his sake, with confidence "that neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, neither death nor life, nor any other creature," shall ever work a separation. And this is high friendliness; sure the persons must needs be understood to be of a friendly mind towards God. And though not only this be their own experience, but they see it to be the common experience of the whole community of believers. Look upon former times and ages. There are whole armies of glorious sufferers and martyrs, whose records they can see and read over. What have these people endured and suffered for his sake! And yet they would trust him, yet they would cleave to him, and nothing would make them turn aside from following him. When you look back upon such an age and such an age, you find there have been multitudes could show their scars, their wounds, their blood: This we have endured for the sake of God and Christ. And yet they would trust him still. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and are gone before into glory. Here is "the faith and patience of the saints." Where are they that have kept the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus, the faith of Jesus, "that have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony, and loved not their lives unto the death?" as we have it in Rev. xii. 11. There is great friendliness in such a trust as this. Especially when, as,

10. We shall consider that they expect no recompense for all this. See their fidelity, all their love, all their sufferings in this world; they never look to be recompensed here. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." It is not in this life that they have hope of recompense; their great hope of recompense is hereafter. When Abraham in the power, and in fruit of such a faith, quitted his all in this world, Abraham, saith God, "get thee up from thy kindred, from thy country, and from thy father's house." It is by faith, it is said, he obeyed, and went, he knew not whither. Into what unknown country must I go? (he might say.)—It is no matter for that, whether you know or not; but follow God's call: and he abandons all, and follows. He trusts, makes a venture in the dark. This is the very nature of faith. Some pagans have understood so much about it. So our noted Voagan among the Platonists speaks of a faith above knowledge, that unites the soul most intimately with the supreme good; and which when a man doth act and exercise, they that have this faith, and are in the exercise of it, they do express it (as his expression is) shutting their eyes. They shut their eyes and trust, wink and trust. So doth Abraham in this:—Go your ways into a country you know not—he goes by faith, he obeyed, and went he knew not whither. I can (as if he had said) give no man an account whither I go; I am only obeying and following the divine call. It is in an unknown country that we all, who are believers indeed, are to expect our recompense. Where was it that he expected this? was it any interest in a terrestrial Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey? No: he deemed himself when there but in a strange country, to which he had such a right, as we nor any man in the world had before to any spot of earth, by an immediate divine grant, a grant from heaven: the great possessor of heaven and earth assigns this spot for him and his posterity, and yet he behaves himself there as in a strange country; he, and Isaac and Jacob, that were heirs with him of the same promise, they declared themselves to be pilgrims and strangers upon the earth. The believer will say, Set me down any where upon earth and it is none of my country, whatsoever right I may have, as they had in that land. No; their faith was to cast anchor for them. But where? within the veil; within such an intexture as kept every thing from their view; an interjected veil; a veil cast between, and woven between them and the great object of their hope. But yet for all that, they trust and they venture; they cast their anchor upon that "which is within the veil, whither Jesus the forerunner is for us entered." This argues a strong propension of a friendly mind towards God, and towards his Christ, and towards this state of things, which they make the discovery and offer of. And in the last place,—

11. It is to be considered too, as that which signifies so much the more the friendliness of this faith; that it is a venture for eternity; such a sort of venture, that if I mistake, there is no correcting the mistake. If I misplace my trust, the matter admits of no alteration, no remedy: it is a trusting of my soul, and a trusting it for somewhat that lies out of my sight, and whence there is no return, no coming back for me to make any terms with this world to any advantage, if I have misplaced my trust. No, here is an adventure made, never to be altered. And the soul doth it with this apprehension, with this prospect. Here I must venture my all, and for eternity, for an everlasting state.

It is fit we should understand what such a faith as the faith of a sincere Christian is, that we may not delude ourselves with names and shows and false appearances. There must be the nature of this faith in all those that believe as Abraham did; and his faith was spoken of as a precedential faith; and as he was the father of believers, the great example. He was not to be justified and saved by one sort of faith, and we by another, but he and we by the same faith. So much it carries with it of a friendly mind towards its blessed object. But let us now observe in the close of this present discourse, before we enter on the third head, what this faith inferreth. I have hitherto observed only what it imports, either as directly noted, or as connoted. I pray let us bethink ourselves. Are not we strangers to these exercises of mind and spirit?—is not this a region and sphere of things that we are unacquainted with, and wherein we are little wont to converse?—do we know what belongs to such applications of mind and spirit inwardly towards the blessed God, and towards the Lord Jesus Christ? If we altogether are so, our religion, our Christianity is a name, a show, a figment. If we are strangers to such applications of mind and spirit to God in Christ, and we have nothing that belongs to this friendly intercourse, I pray why is it? We would be loth to call ourselves God's enemies and Christ's enemies for all that. But yet he hath told us, he that is not with him is against him; and if we be indeed such friends to God and his Christ, such is to be seen in inward converse of heart and spirit with them; and nothing can excuse my not conversing with a friend, a great friend, a sincere friend, a wise friend, and a most obliging friend, but such things as these, for instance—Why, he is at a great distance, I cannot come at him. That is none of the case. He is not far from any one of us: "In him we live, and move, and have our being." What can excuse our not conversing with him who is so constantly nigh? That request which you have heard so much of, "The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit," shows he continually may and can be so. It is as possible as it is desirable, to have him with our spirits. What can excuse our slighting of a friend that we may be with every hour of the day, or every moment of the hour, if we will? What can excuse strangeness there, shyness there?

It cannot be said he is inaccessible: that would excuse: but there is no such thing. There is a throne of grace appointed on purpose, whereto we may freely approach. "there is a new and living way consecrated by the blood of Christ," leading into the divine presence. You cannot say you have no business with him: that would excuse you that you do not converse with such and such a friend.—I have other great business in the world, but with him I have none. You cannot say so as to God; you have constant business with him, and he hath constant business with you. It is he with whom you have continually to do; "all things are open to him with whom you have to do." It is spoken in the present time, to show that we have to do with him always; Heb. iv. 13. You cannot say your friend is so busy that he is at no leisure to mind you, if you come to him: no such thing; for you are directed "wherein soever you are called therein to abide with God," 1 Cor. vii. 24. Ergo, if you should find leisure, he would be always at leisure; he can mind every one, and will do so to those who apply themselves to him; "his eyes are ever towards the righteous, and his eyes are open unto their cry." What can it signify but a disinclination and unfriendliness, that we have so little to do with God and Christ from day to day? It must signify, that other things so engage and take us up, that our concernments with God can have no room, no place in our hearts. They are things of another sphere, which we are most taken up about, and which appears to us more considerable—either the public affairs and concerns of a present world, or our own private ones. With a great many, we have too much cause to apprehend, the session of this present parliament is a far more considerable thing than that glorious concessus with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. Those vast and glorious multitudes which are to make up that concessus. Oh, what friends are any society of men in comparison of the glorious society above! The affairs of this present time, let them be but considered in reference to the tract of time, what a little inch in the series of time is the present time of ours, about which many are so intensely engaged and taken up. When this juncture of time is over with us, look upon the affairs but two or three months after, and what do they all appear and signify then? And yet the matters that be within our inch of time are, with the most, more considerable than a vast and endless eternity, and have more of their serious thoughts. The great question is, What will become of me in the great day when all the children of God are to be associated together to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, there? Here is the great question, and it will be determined upon this single point—Have I that faith that belongs to that society as their characteristical note, as their distinction, as that by which they that belong to God are to be known from them who do not belong unto him, a heavenly from an

earthly race and offspring?—Let me look into myself, and discern my own state and character, and see if I have any such faith in me as includes and draws the whole frame and current of my soul and all its powers towards God, and Christ, and heaven, and an eternal state of things.

SERMON XXXV.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

THE third thing which remains to be spoken to is,

III. To show you what such a faith doth certainly infer. This also hath much of friendliness towards God in it; and it infers divers things that are so: as—

1. What is indeed very general, an entire living to God. If any soul do believe unto righteousness and salvation, so as now to be justified, and finally saved, that very faith of his will certainly infer the most entire living unto God; the most friendly thing towards God that can be thought. It is impossible that I can bear more of friendliness in my mind and soul towards any one, than when I consecrate my life to him—devote my life to him—devote myself to him. This is certainly inferred by that faith which avails to justification and salvation. I pray observe, that where you have that phrase of "living to God," Gal. ii. 19. that the whole context speaks of this very subject; justifying faith which is mentioned in this so expressly. Look at Gal. ii. from verse 16 to the end; "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Here is a most positive and delucid assertion of the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone, exclusive of works. But the apostle objects to himself, or obviates the objections of others, in verse 17. "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." This looks like a doctrine that serves the purposes of sin, and as if Christ came into the world to minister unto sin, to promise indulgences for it; not that men might cease to sin, but that they may sin with less danger and more safety. "God forbid," saith he—abhorred be any such thought, "if I build again the things which I destroyed, [and to admit this will be building what I had been aiming all this while to destroy,] I make myself a transgressor," I fight with myself. All my doctrine causes nothing in it but inconsistency and self-repugnance: "For (saith he) I through the law am dead to the law." But, with what design? upon what account?—that I might live unto God: "I through the law am dead to the law." The law hath killed all the hopes and expectations I had of life, or justification by it, and hath as a severe, but as a faithful, dexterous schoolmaster, driven me to Christ, (as it is afterwards spoken in the same chapter,) and constrained me to have recourse to him, to seek righteousness and life there. And what then? Is it that afterwards I might live as I list? No; far be it; it is only that I might live unto God; a life more entirely holy than it was possible for me ever to have lived upon other terms. And this living thus to God is manifestly spoken of as an inferred, consequential thing unto justification, as a thing that naturally and necessarily ensues. But it is the most friendly thing towards God that can be imagined and thought of, that I should dedicate my whole life to him; and this doth not belong to friendship as friendship, but it belongs peculiarly to friendship with God. If any other friend should lay claim to the whole of my life, that my life should be spent entirely for him, and I should do nothing but for him; it is the highest insolence for him to expect or require it; but in this case it is the highest insolence to deny it unto this friend, for do not I owe my whole life to Him, if he hath justified me, if he hath imparted a righteousness to me? For what was I before, but a condemned lost creature. My life was forfeited. When he hath given me righteousness, he hath given me my life. The case cannot be thus among other friends. There is usually some sort of parity; but here is the greatest imparity and disparity. Another friend may have obliged me, perhaps I have at some time or other obliged one as much. But here the obligation lies all on one side; and it is the deepest obligation that can be thought. So that what was an hyperbole in the apostle to Philemon, "thou owest thy very self to me," (and he expresseth it with a diminution, not to say it,) it is no hyperbole here. Every justified person owes himself to his justifier, his whole life. For do not we know it was forfeited, entirely forfeited? If it be a state of justification, how did we come into it? It was a state of condemnation out of which we did pass. This is nothing to the ordinary friendship that is between man and man. But if an offended prince do take a condemned wretch out of his cage and chains, and from the dungeon and gibbet, into his arms, and embraces him; gives him life and his favour, and all the dignities and honours he can load him with; here is one owes his very self, in a subordinate way, as much as it is possible a creature can to a creature. Though the prince claims that life which he cannot preserve; for when he hath given it in one moment, a disease may take it away in the next. But here it is the most reasonable thing in all the world, that I should give my life to him who hath justified me.

And whereas all were under condemnation before; when a person is justified, he is made to "reign in life," as that most emphatical expression is, Rom. v. 17. Death had passed over all by one. By one man's offence death reigned. But now they that receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, do reign in life by one Jesus Christ, or they shall do so, as some copies read it. "They shall reign in life." The life of a king is reckoned a sacred thing, inviolable—not to be touched. He hath made us kings and priests unto God, having "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5. Then such lives are not to be touched. "Touch not mine anointed." They are all anointed ones, who have this life imparted to them.

I beseech you consider this case according to the mighty weight of it, and consider it as your own case, or that which is your case, or may be. For we are all of us here before the Lord, either in a state of condemnation, or in a state of justification this hour, at this time. If we have any of us cause to suspect that fearful state to be ours, a state of condemnation, I hope you do not intend to continue there; you think not, sure, of abiding so, in such a state as abiding in death, a condemned person in death, under death. Take we the state of our case as it is. Let every one view himself about this matter. Oh, my soul, what dost thou think of thy state? Either thou art a justified or a condemned man. What dost thou think of thy state? If thou thinkest thou art condemned, what is to be done in this case? It is dreadful to think of taking up and abiding here. But we are told what is to be done. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved," John iii. 16, 17. Believe in the Son of God, and this brings you under his righteousness, under his shadow, and the protection of it. It shelters you, covers you. "He that believeth in the Son of God, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already." The sentence is past, though yet a reversible sentence—a sentence that may be reversed. Here our case is plain, to

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wit, that our main business must be to consider, do we believe in the Son of God? with such a faith as the Gospel meaneth, with a lively, Gospel faith. For if the Gospel do mean one thing by faith, and I do understand quite another, it is not my mistaken notion that will save me. Do I think to be saved by a false notion? By a faith that is not only but notional, but my very notion also is false. That will not do. I am to consider, ergo, what this faith of mine infers. It signifies, or infers, my living to God, or it signifies nothing. How earnestly and emphatically is it inculcated in this chapter, where the text lies, that a dead faith cannot justify, and cannot save. A faith that hath no life in it, no spirit, no energy, no operativeness. It is not the works that proceed from faith that do justify, but it is a workingness in faith which is requisite to justification:—a faith that will work, not a dead faith. And we are, ergo, to know, that in the same instant when a man's faith is available for the obtaining of righteousness for him, it is available for the obtaining of life too, of a vital principle. God doth never give these separately, he always gives them together. This faith unites the soul with Christ. He is righteousness and life to it at once. His righteousness (as hath been told you) never continues one moment the clothing of a carcass, of a dead soul. It is never designed to be the habit and apparel of such a soul. It is too rich a thing, too glorious a thing, to be so. There is no righteousness without having of a Christ. "But he that hath the Son, hath life," at the same time when the soul is caught into union with him. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He is made unto us holy life upon our being in him, as he is thereupon made righteousness to us, 1 Cor. i. 30. This is plain, intelligible truth to any that will use their understanding, and apply their minds to consider it. But to speak a little more distinctly of this matter of living to God, as it is a thing inferred from, and consequential upon, the faith that justifies, I shall note unto you a few particular distinct heads, under this first more general one, as,

(1.) That whenever the soul is brought to believe unto righteousness, (Rom. x. 10.) it is a heart principle, a heart exercise, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." And whenever he doth so, he then receives a new spiritual life, a divine life. He was alienated from the life of God before, but now he comes to participate in a certain sort of divine life. This is so plain, that nothing can be more. "He that findeth me, findeth life." There is a blessing pronounced upon waiting on this account. "Blessed is he (saith Christ, the Son of God, the eternal Logos, or Wisdom, Prov. viii. 34.) that waiteth, that is continually waiting at the posts of my house; for he that findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." Findeth life; what doth that signify? It signifies that life in this world is a great rarity. A man may be long in quest of it, and not find it. It is a world lost in death. "Death hath passed upon all by one, inasmuch as all have sinned," Rom. v. 12. It a poor soul that dwells in the shadow of death, casts about its wondering eyes and thoughts this way and that way, and saith, Where shall I find life? Why, (saith our Lord,) he that findeth me, findeth life. All thy inquiries are in vain, and lost, and to no purpose, till thou meet with me. And you shall find me if you seek. "He that seeks me early, shall find me," ver. 17. "But if he finds me, he finds life." The very first meeting proves vital to him. For do but consider what is said in that same context, Rom. v. 12, 16, 17. Death had passed over all, reigned over all, unto condemnation. "All were dead," as the matter is also expressed, 2 Cor. v. 14. "If Christ died for all, then were all dead." Death passed over all. But how? Not only in law, but in fact. Pray observe it, all were dead, not only in law, but in fact too. Dead in trespasses and sins. Death did prevail, spread itself and its dismal horrid shadow over the very souls of men universally. And that by one—that one who first sinned, and so let in sin and death into the world. But then observe what is said in the 14th verse, that "that one was the figure of him who was to come." Which might signify, that as the former Adam did let in sin, and by it death, upon all, so as to bring all not only under condemnation, but under an actual death, in the moral and more horrid sense, as death stands in opposition both to sanctity and to felicity. So as that in these respects it should reach the very souls of men, which, though they are naturally immortal, are morally (it is too plain) mortal; and not only mortal, but dead in the moral sense; to wit, as death stands in opposition to holy life, and as it stands in opposition to blessed life. So all were actually dead, as well as in law. Now if that first Adam was the figure of Him that was to come, pray consider in consequence what the second Adam was to be, and what he was to do. We are told that, "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was a quickening spirit," 1 Cor. xv. 45. So that now if you touch him, you touch life. If you meet with him, if you are joined with him, you are delivered by it. You have life not only in right, but in fact. As under the other Adam there was death, not only deserved, but as actually incumbent, death had passed over all. That is, here were the beginnings of eternal death, the beginnings of hell. Christ is the Lord from heaven. If once you unite with him by that faith, that true faith of the Gospel, you have not only now a right to life, but you have the beginning of it, the inchoation of it in fact, as there was the beginning of death and hell in souls by the former Adam, the figure of this latter. And you are to reign in life by Jesus Christ. Life exults in you, springeth in your hearts, and is gradually springing up more and more towards eternal life. At least where that is not so perceptible, there are springings which import life, strugglings, and impatience of deadness. Whereas one that is entirely dead, is impatient of nothing—feels nothing. But if there be aimings and strugglings for life; oh! this dead heart of mine; that I could find it to live more! this speaks life, a new life, which is working in you, and struggling in you, towards its perfection. And then you must not only gather here, that this living to God implies being made alive spiritually, a participant of a holy, divine life; but that it doth, in the next place,

(2.) Directly terminate on God. Here is life, living; and it is living unto God, which is the certain result and consequent of that faith that justifies and saves. It is, I say, a life that points at God; tends and works directly towards him. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 11. I pray note the appositeness and the emphasis of these words: "Dead to sin," having no mind to live a sinning life any longer. "But alive to God:" here is a new life now given—a spiritual, divine life. But what is it? a loose and a vagrant thing, that works at random, no one can tell how or which way? No, far be it from thinking so. It is a life directly pointing upon God; carries the soul in all its powers and thoughts, and affections and inclinations, in one current towards God. "Alive to God through Jesus Christ." There was nothing but deadness towards God before; life enough to every thing else, but only no inclination towards God;—no inclination, no concern with God. But now here is being made "alive to God through Jesus Christ." And this is the effect and consequent of union to Christ by faith; when we are planted together with him into the likeness of his death, and into the likeness of his resurrection, and by a certain kind of conjunction, or being married to him, we come to bring forth fruit unto God. As it is in the foregoing verses of Rom. vi. And,

(3.) This is further to be noted concerning this living to God, as inferred by and consequential upon that faith that justifies and saves; that the workings and stream and current of this life, and of all the powers of the soul so enlivened, are directed towards God, and by a friendly affection. I pray note that further: they all work towards God; this life, and every thing that belongs to it, tends and works, and beats and contends God-wards. And what is that which makes it do so? A friendliness of inclination towards him, and a suitableness of spirit unto him. They are, therefore, whenever they come to believe unto righteousness, to be called the friends of God; for now the whole life, from the power of friendly inclination, comes to be directed God-ward. And so living to him is not from necessity and terror and dread, but from choice and kind propension. And,

(4) It is hereupon necessarily consequent, that the soul is obliged to be very much in the exercises of religion; because in all the acts of religion there is a direct and immediate application unto God. If it be brought by the power and tendency of that faith which justifies into a course of living unto God, my life must be a thing, in the whole of it, sacred unto God; then it cannot be but it must be taken up in the exercises of religion, because therein it hath to do with God directly and immediately, but more remotely and collaterally when one is otherwise employed. The exercises of religion must thereby be delectable to such a one, for he liveth unto God; that the faith that justifies him hath inferred: from that very inclination of mind (saith he) I must be with God. And hence it will be the most remote thing in all the world from such a one to count the exercises of religion wearisome. But he will surely have that habitual estimate; though the flesh may be many times weak and wayward, the spirit will be willing so far as it is influenced and animated by such a life. And, therefore, among the other exercises of religion which such a life, and that faith which hath justified a soul, must imply, those exercises of religion which I have been so lately pressing upon you will be looked upon as no cumbersome imposition. The exercises of family religion, as well as those of the closet and those of the church, they will all carry a pleasantness, a felicity in them, proportionable to the measure of life received.

And I would have you now to consider the providence of God. It is observable to you and me that I was called off from this subject by a general agreement of my brethren to speak to you of that about family religion before I had finished this. So that that discourse did even fall into this before I had concluded it. Observe the providence of God in it. For by this means it comes to pass that I am cast upon it to give you the shortest and fullest directory how to manage that business of family religion, as well as other exercises of religion, faithfully, pleasantly, and to purpose. Thus in general, whenever you are to do acts of religion, I pray consider your state. What is my state, wherein I am now to appear before God in this or that religious performance or exercise? Shall I appear before him as a justified person, or as a condemned person? Oh what shall I do if I am to appear ordinarily under the latter notion, as a condemned person? I come with my family (whatever they be) myself a condemned wretch. It is true it is a case that needs prayer; but it is a very uncomfortable case, for all that, when a person must do so from day to day. And therefore look well to your state. This is a state (as was told you before) that is not to be rested in, upon any terms. Though you are not to throw off the exercises of religion because you suspect your state to be bad, but in continuing of them to hope and expect it will mend and be better. But I would have you consider what it is. If you must come always in approaching unto God as a condemned person, or being a condemned person, (whether you apprehend it or no,) you will always approach to him either with the heart of a slave or the heart of a stone. Either with a misgiving, affrighted, amazed heart, the heart of a slave; or a stupid senseless heart, dead and cold as a stone. And therefore, especially see that such exercises of religion, as well as all other, do proceed from the conjunct principles of faith and love, or faith and godliness, towards God, the very things that the text hath in it, as you see, believing and being the friend of God. See that such principles animate all your religion, your family religion, and all other; otherwise it goes all for lost.

[1.] The principle of faith. Without that it is impossible for you to please God in any thing you do, Heb. xi. 6. By it you come to offer an acceptable sacrifice. By faith, Abel offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; a more acceptable one. The word is a fuller one, a sacrifice which had a fulness in it compared with Cain's. Without it all your sacrifices, all your duties, will be dead formalities and nothing else; neither pleasing to God, nor pleasing to you; there can be no pleasure in them on the one hand, nor on the other. It is true you must go on in a course of such duties, for the law of nature (as was told you) obligeth you thereto, and stands unrepealed: for (as hath been said) to suppose a repeal of the law of nature, is to suppose that God would divest himself of his deity, and you should be divested of humanity, both at once. As long as God is God, and man is man, this part of the law of nature, which concerns this state of things between him and man, must be unalterable, and can never be repealed. It is that which his law requires of you most indispensably. You must go on yet, still aim at bettering your state, and getting into that faith by which you shall be exempt from that condemnation. Into it, (I say,) into the power and spirit of it. Indeed here lies the snare and danger, that when people first find themselves urged, and possibly are brought to apprehend the reasonableness and necessity of going on in such a course of duty, they expect to be justified in that way. No, never till you reach that faith which unites you to Christ. But this may be your way towards that faith. If you should think that your dead spiritless duties are to supply the room of Christ, vital faith, and a living religion proceeding from thence, this is all a mistake, and the most dangerous one that can be thought. To be justified by our own works, and such pitiful dead works, it speaks, as the apostle's determination of the matter is, Gal. v. 4, 5. that "Christ is become of none effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." There is an eternal law binding you to such duty, and which is invariable and unalterable. But what then? must you think of being justified by it? No; then Christ will be of none effect, and ye are fallen from grace. But we, through the Spirit, do wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. The great hopes of righteousness we wait for by faith, and by that alone, through the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, prompting and teaching us so to do. But this is the stupid, senseless absurdity which hath seized the minds of multitudes, that when their works are least worth, then they expect most from them. When they are all worth nothing, they account of being justified by them; when they are all dead works. When a man's soul comes to be made alive, by how much the more he lives so much the more he sees that the best works he is capable of in this state and region of mortality, can have nothing in them (though they have never so much of spiritual and divine life) unto the purpose of justification; for they never were designed to justle Christ out of his office. Nor are the offices of Christ and the Holy Ghost to mingle or be confounded, and made to interfere with one another, upon any terms. Such living works (when living) serve for other necessary and most excellent purposes, but not to justify us. They serve to qualify us for communion with God, and to enable us to serve and glorify him in the world, and to carry on a preparedness for us more and more for an inheritance among them that are sanctified, or with the spirits in light. See to that, that in all the exercises of religion, (though while it is not so, they are not to be forborne and laid aside in families, closets, or otherwise yet,) you aim to get that principle of faith which may mend your state, and make that good, and make you capable now (having your consciences sprinkled by Jesus Christ from dead works) of serving the living God, of living service suitable to the living God. And,

[2.] That other conjunct principle, love. Friendly affection, see that animates all your worship too, that your souls be carried towards God by friendly inclination: as was said, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." If you have that faith by which you believe unto righteousness, it will work by love; it carries your souls unto God by a mighty power of love. This is living to God, the certain consequences of that belief unto righteousness; or unto which God doth impute righteousness. And how applicable is this to the purpose afore-mentioned, *i. e.* that all the exercises of religion, and especially of family religion, be animated by that principle of love to God, or friendliness towards God, faith. Do but take notice, whereas the text speaks of Abraham, (he was the instance,) "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God." Pray see what the inclination was that carried him to take that care of his family that he did, (Gen. xviii. 17, 18, 19.) "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I intend to do?" He is my friend, I cannot hide things from my friend. And why should he be looked upon as such a friend? "I know him, that he will command his

children, and his household after him, to serve me." Abraham will take this care of his family, because he is my friend.

See, therefore, that this principle goes into it, otherwise all goes for lost. Why are you so careful? Why it is kindness to my friend, my greatest and best friend. I see his interest low in the world, he is little called upon or sought after. There are few among men that will own him. But I do it because he is my friend, and because he hath captivated my very heart, and made that in some measure friendly unto him. That I may preserve, and that I may revive to my very uttermost, his languishing interest in a lost world. He hath but a few friends, but I and my house will serve him; we will show our friendliness towards him, whosoever do or will not do.

It comes in my way to give you this short, but full, directory in reference to the great subject we were so lately on. See that it be managed by that faith which will always justify. And see that it be influenced by a principle of love and friendly inclination towards God, and because you cannot endure his interest should be lost by your neglect, at least so far as you can signify any thing to the promoting and preserving it.

But here it may be said, that all the performances of an unjustified and unregenerate person are sin. But what? are men obliged to sin? And should we urge them to sin? This admits of a very plain and easy answer. For,

1. There can be no declining of such performances when the injunction is in the law before us; but it must be upon a resolution not to do them. A resolution must be taken; I will not do them. There will be sin in doing, but there will be far greater in resolving not to do. The sin that is in doing, is only in the wrong manner, that I do not such a thing aright. But resolving not to do, is sin even in the very substance of that resolution.

How vast is the difference between that which is in the very substance sinful, and that which is only sinful in the circumstance. And,

2. This is to be said too, that not only the praying, the hearing, and the other acts of natural worship done by an unjustified, unregenerate person, are sin, but all their other actions too. The very ploughing of the wicked is sin. And what, therefore, must the whole unregenerate world do nothing? Are they all to sit still? If they eat they sin; if they drink they sin. Must they, therefore, starve, and neither eat nor drink? So absurd is such a pretence against doing such a duty, though it have no tendency at all to recommend us to God. And, indeed, were the duties of regenerate persons themselves never so entirely vital and holy, they would signify nothing for the purpose of recommending us to God. They do proceed from the Holy Ghost, but we must not confound the offices of Christ and the Holy Ghost. It is the work of the Holy Ghost to sanctify us, and qualify us for communion with God. It is the work of Christ to justify us by his blood, and by his righteousness applied to us. It was Christ that was crucified for us. And, indeed, in reference to the matter of justification, even the most holy lives of the best of saints, they do more by positive influence for the justifying of Christ, than for the justifying of us. He is the eternal wisdom of God. And wisdom is justified of her children. We justify him; we show that he did not undertake a vague thing, or come upon a vain errand into this world, when he gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." When his end and design is so far answered, wisdom is justified. This appears to have been the work and design of wisdom, that it was not a foolish undertaking; for it hath succeeded, it doth prosper, and shall more and more do so. By positive influence, it more justifies him than it does us. Our justification comes quite another way, being justified freely by his blood. All the holiness in the world could never make him amends for my having been once a sinner, and thereby incurred the divine wrath. It is true we have communion with God, walking in the light as he is in the light. But it is "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, that cleanseth us from all sin," so as that we may come guiltless into that communion, 1 John i. 7. The truth is, that the doctrine of faith, and righteousness, and justification, have been talked of, and tossed into mere airy and insipid notions. Though so excellent, so glorious doctrines, Christians have learned to dispute them into nothing; even as rich and generous wine, thrown from vessel to vessel till it becomes vapid and spiritless, and even without savour. It is the greater pity and shame it should be so, when the truth in these matters is so very plain and so very easy, that he that runs may read it. But many have had a greater mind to dispute and contend about these things, than to draw spirit and life and nutriment to their souls out of them.

In the exercise of religion, there is that in the faith by which they are justified and saved, that will prompt unto them, if that faith hath place in them. And we are concerned to see to it that it have, that is, to look to our state. And if we cannot conclude it to be for the present good, not to sit down there; for to sit down destitute of such a faith, is to sit down in the midst of death and under condemnation. That is the fourth thing which living to God, as a consequent of that faith which justifies and will finally save, doth carry in it of friendship towards God. Living to God, inferred by such a faith, doth include in it a continual disposition to the exercises of religion, as the result of that faith, and as proceeding from an amiable and friendly affection towards God. But,

(5.) This living to God, as it is consequential of faith which justifies and will save, continually obligeth to do nothing against him to our uttermost or with self-allowance. Herein the reason of the thing speaks itself; if my whole life be a dedicated, devoted life, and all the powers and properties and actions belonging thereunto be so devoted, then there is nothing to be done against him who is the end and terminus of this life. I can allow myself to do nothing, I am surprised if ever I do any thing; it is an unintended indeliberate thing, if any thing be done to the prejudice of his interest, that any thing diminisheth or soils his glory, or obscures and darkens it. It will be a grief to the soul, if it be a believing soul, (if it believe, by that faith which he justifies and saves,) that he is offended. For there is hereupon that entireness of self-dedication to him, that there is nothing of us left excepted from obligation, or that can be directed against him or his interest in any kind. I can do nothing (saith the apostle) against the truth, but for it. I can do nothing; it is a certain sort of powerful impotency, an impotency that speaks power. I can do nothing against the truth; there is a positive principle obliges and prompts me otherwise. So the apostle, Gal. v. 17. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would:" indeed in neither kind. But it is plain the latter by the scope of that context must be meant, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;" that is the thing there to be proved, that walking in the Spirit is a certain remedy against fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. How is that proved? Why, saith he, though it be true that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, yet the Spirit doth so strive and lust against the flesh, that ye cannot do what, according to your carnal, corrupt inclinations, you otherwise would. You cannot, you are inhibited; for you look upon yourselves as devoted ones; your life is consecrated, and all the powers relating thereto. And therefore, they cannot be used to counterwork the great design you have undertaken and engaged to serve. If I live unto God pursuantly unto faith in that Gospel, then I cannot deliberately do any thing which hath a direct tendency to depress his interest or darken his glory.

(6.) This faith, as it infers our living to God, allows us not to have any separate interest from him. The maxim of that great pagan, "All things of friends are common," obtains strongly in this case. There is a friendship between God and me. I must not have a separate interest. His interest is mine, and my interest is his. So that if my life be a sacred, devoted life, when I buy, when I sell, when this and that way I am employed in secular and civil negociations, it will be looked upon as a most unlawful and wicked presumption to make myself mine own end in all this. No, God is my end; I live unto God. And that faith by which I am justified, obliges and prompts me hereunto; that is, so and so I do, that I may glorify God. Not finally that I may please myself, and

indulge my own inclinations, and satisfy any appetite of mine; whether it be an appetite to live in pleasure, or whether it be an appetite to grow rich and great in the world. No, by no means; my life is a sacred thing, a devoted thing. "To me to live is Christ;" and so all the actions of human and civil life must terminate in God, as the end, if indeed I live to God. For if that be my end, it is my last end; and the last end is that into which all others do run. And whatsoever doth not serve the last end, doth really and finally serve none at all. And so all those actions are lost actions; *i. e.* they cannot come properly under the notion of human actions. If they do not refer to the last end, they are beside any end. It is the last end that infers whatever there is of order in this world; all runs into confusion that is not referred to the last end.

We are concerned to look carefully to our hearts about this, that we suffer not any secret dispositions and workings of spirit contrary hereunto. To go from day to day, and I cannot answer it to my conscience, that it is God that I have been serving; serving him in my calling, and not myself; oh, in what peace can such a one lie down at night, when he hath been playing the idolater all day, and usurping upon majesty—the Majesty of heaven? For it is God's prerogative to be all things, the last as well as the first, "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." For a creature born but the other day, lately sprung up into being, to rival the universal Lord of heaven and earth, and to take upon him as if he were God—I will be my own end, pursue an interest of my own, separately and apart from God—this is to pluck himself from under the rule of the Universal Ruler, and to say, I will have no Lord over me; I am my own, and not his. But a man's having devoted his life, so as that he can be said to live to God, is necessarily exclusive of all this. And thereupon again,

(7.) This living to God, consequent upon justifying and saving faith, will oblige and prompt us to take in God with us in all our affairs; to go about nothing without him; for we are to act dependently in every thing; to commit our way unto the Lord. Committing is believing; committing is trusting. And we are to cast all our burden upon him, and all our care upon him, expecting he will care for us. This living to God includes. Every man, as he is called therein, let him abide with God, 1 Cor. vii. 24. Implying, you have nothing to do in all this world, which you cannot better do with God than without him. You have no business to do in all this world, wherein you need to sever and part yourselves from God. No, take him in with you, as your first and last. And if we design him as our end so as that he be our last, it will necessarily infer the other too. If I am to act for him in every thing, I must act from him; otherwise I act unproportionably. God cannot be served but with his own. What is to be done for his glory, is to be done by his power. This is that trust in God which allows us not to lean to our own understanding, but to commence with him in all things, and have our eye keep quick turns with him; ever and anon to look up and apply ourselves to him, and appeal to him; Lord, thou seest that I am aiming at thee, as I do depend on thee for conduct and support all along in my way. And,

(8.) This living to God, as it is consequent of such a faith, implies, and must bring about, our enjoying of all things in him and with him, and in order to him. As well what we enjoy, as what we do, is all in him, if our life be once a devoted life. For we are to consider life, not only as an active principle, but also as a fruition. And a life devoted to God, doth as well enjoy all things in God, whatsoever he doth enjoy, as all for him. So that this will be the sense of a believing soul, (which is prompted by that faith to a course of living unto God,) "I have no enjoyment under the sun, that carries any taste or relish in it without God." Many will say, "Who will show us any good?" But, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and this shall be more to me than the increase of corn and wine and oil. When men can please themselves with the creature, (excluding God, setting God aside,) solace themselves with this and that creature-comfort apart from God, neglecting and disregarding God; this is quite beside the genius of a life sacred to God,—most contrary to the notion of living to him. For life is the principle by which we enjoy what is enjoyable, as well as the principle by which we do or practise what is practicable. And that is one thing which that faith which is justifying and will save doth infer, which carries very great appearance and expressions of friendliness in it, living to God. The most friendly thing we are capable of doing. And it appears so, if we consider the several mentioned things that do concur in it. But,

2. It infers too, in the next place, liberty towards God, as well as living to him. The next thing to life, is liberty. A life dedicated to God, is inferred by a vital faith; and liberty is as certainly and necessarily inferred. That is a liberty and freedom towards him,—and what is more friendly? By that you estimate friendship; to wit, by liberty and freedom towards one another, which is the certain effect and consequent of vital trust. There is no such thing as real living faith, but from a spirit of faith, of which we read, 2 Cor. iv. 13. "We having the same spirit of faith," the same that David had; (he is quoting David there in that place;) "I believed, therefore have I spoken," saith the apostle Paul, as David had said so many hundred years before. We also believe, and, therefore, speak, having the same spirit of faith. So that there never was faith in the world, among them that did really and truly believe in God, but it was from one and the same spirit of faith, working uniformly in the several ages and successions of time. The same spirit of faith which David had in his time, the apostle had in his time. And he doth not speak of himself separately, but including other Christians, "We having the same spirit of faith." Lay this scripture to that other in the foregoing chapter, 2 Cor. iii. 17. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Where that Spirit is not, the soul is in bonds. They that are not under grace, but under a condemning law, (which they must be, by standing under a covenant of works,) they are slaves; that covenant "genders to bondage," (Gal. iv. 24.) the covenant of grace unto liberty. And so all that are of the spiritual seed, born of the Spirit, (as all true believers are,) they are the children of "that Jerusalem which is free, and is the mother of us all." Hence, from that faith which instates a man in the grace of the covenant, he hath a freedom in his spirit towards God. And do but mark hereupon the connexion between these two things, in that of the Psalmist, Psalm lxii. 8. "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him." He that hath no vital trust in God, is shut up towards God, his spirit is pent in, he hath no liberty towards God. When he goes to pray, or applies himself to any other work, he is like a man that cannot find his hands. He is manacled and bound, hand and foot. The spirit that rules in him, is a spirit of bondage: but the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of sons, is a Spirit of liberty and freedom. He can be free with God, as a man can be free with his friend. And it is friendly when he can be so; when he can pour out his soul to him, make his complaint, spread his desires, and represent his grievances. You can do so towards such a one, towards whom you bear a friendly mind, but not to a stranger. And,

3. Such a faith as justifies, and will save, infers a communication of secrets. This it infers, that you do not affect to cover or keep any thing secret from God. You cannot only use a liberty in expressing your desires, and making your complaints and moans to him, but you have nothing at all that you would reserve and hide from him, or make a secret to him. This faith prompts unto. You very well know, that when we communicate a secret, that which we would have be a secret, we seek to commit and intrust it to a friend. I trust such a man with my secrets; that is friendship. Such a friendly mind accompanies faith towards God. I do not desire that any thing should be a secret with me from him. A guilty soul that hath none of this faith, cries, Oh, give me a corner, give me a cloud, give me darkness, in which I may be wrapt up. When it is said "there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves:" it is the thing they seek,—that is the thing they covet. But the believing soul saith, I would have no secret between me and this great friend, nothing that I would reserve as a secret from him. So he is pleased to express friendliness to us, by communicating his secrets, by unfolding to us that Gospel which was a secret from ages, and from generations by-past. So our Lord Christ argues his own friendliness to his disciples: "I have called you friends; for all things that have

been made known unto me of my Father, I have made known unto you," John xv. 15. As you have largely heard. The same way are we to express friendliness to him. And faith will infer it, that we can freely open to him all our secrets, and never be upon our reserves towards him. And not only because we cannot help it, but because we choose it. It is not a thing unavoidably imposed upon us; but it is a thing that a friendly mind prompts us to, to tell him all our hearts. We would have no design which should not be under his eye, and about which we would not communicate with him. This the faith that justifies will infer. I should have insisted a little in the next place upon this,

4. That it obliges to the strictest watchfulness against the insinuations of this world into our hearts; because the friendship of this world is enmity against God. I pray bear it away with you. I must in faithfulness warn you of it. If you consider it not, all friendly concern with God is at an end. To have the world follow you into your closets, and into family duties, and into the public solemnities of worship, and you still carry the world with you, a worldly heart, a worldly mind, and worldly desires—this is very dangerous; for, know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity against God? When it is said, "Let your conversation be without covetousness," it is added, "for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. There are five negatives, never, never, never, never, never. What doth that imply? It implies thus much,—that if yet I will allow, and indulge and cherish in my soul a predominant worldly inclination, I care not for the Divine presence, in comparison of this world. It signifies, that the world is more to me than God and the Divine presence, and the glory of it; and that I had rather he should forsake me, than I should forsake this world. A worldly inclination is for this a less tolerable and more unallowable thing, because it contributes nothing to a man's enjoying more of this world, for there is nothing to be done in the pursuit of any honest design in the world, but I may better do it in subordination to God, than in opposition. I may use my understanding as well, and take in God with me, and keep myself in the Divine presence, and continue united and cleaving to him in heart and spirit. And, therefore, if a worldly mind do draw a soul off from God, this is to be worldly for worldliness sake; it profiteth a man nothing, it plucks him away from God to no purpose. Any thing that were lawful and honest and just, might as well have been done, designed, and enjoyed, notwithstanding my intercourse with God. Faith is our victory over the world; that faith, therefore, which doth justify a man, and set all things right between God and him, it must needs fortify against worldly inclinations, and make this world despicably little, and render God always gloriously great in mine eyes.

SERMON XXXVI.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

THUS I have evinced the truth of the doctrine of this text, by showing you at large what there is of friendliness in this matter on God's part, and what there is on their part whom he brings to believe. It is the use of all which remains to be insisted upon and recommended to you. Wherein I shall not be diffuse, having had occasion to insist very largely, by way of use, upon a subject which you know was very congenerous to this, and of great affinity to it. But very instructive inferences it very obviously affords us. As,

1. We may collect hence, That bad as this world is, God hath yet some portion in it, to wit, a people peculiar to himself. Here he hath some that do believe in him, that he counts righteous, that he calls and treats as his "friends." And these are great peculiarities. You may see it is not his design (though this world have been all in a dreadful apostacy from God) to quit his interest in it, or quite to abandon it, and lay aside all kind thoughts towards it. This, you may see, is remote from him. It is not his intention, that though all have been in transgression against him, yet that all shall be involved in one condemnation, and in one ruin. But he hath his portion, that he doth and will exempt out of the common ruin, that shall not lie under an everlasting doom and condemnation with the rest of the perishing world. Those that "shall not be condemned with the world," as the Scripture expression is, 1 Cor. xi. 32. He hath in this world some friends that he will treat and deal with as such, and these must not lie under everlasting condemnation. His friends are such as do believe him, and as believing in him are not condemned, as John v. 24. And they "shall never come into condemnation," for they are "passed from death unto life." He justifies, he imputes righteousness to them, as is expressed here. And "Who is he that condemneth" when God justifies? Rom. viii. And see what triumphs are erected in that chapter to the grace of God. "Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?" No tribulation, no affliction, no principality; nothing that is present, nothing that is to come, shall ever separate them.

Methinks it is a comfortable, pleasant thought, that, taking a prospect of this world, beholding it so generally with a dark, dismal, and gloomy shadow of death; beholding it lying in wickedness, and under the power of him who is called the god of this world, that yet God should have a select and peculiar people in it. What a glorious design was this, the forming of a society out of such a world as this, as should be called the friends of God. It is pleasant, and it ought to seem a great thing to our thoughts, that it should be so. And sure it must put us upon reflection: Oh, am I of that happy society, of that select society? Such a society God hath in this world, that is out of doubt; a society of men that he calls his friends, that bear his character. That (I say) is out of all doubt. Whether we be of that number or no?—it is pity that should be a doubt? And methinks it should not be very easy to our minds while it is so. While this is with us a doubtful case, and we cannot speak clearly to this question. Am I of that society justly called the friends of God? But,

2. We may further collect hence, that as God has such a peculiar people in this world, who do specially belong to him, so this people are distinguished from the rest of the world by some very peculiar excellencies. Here is not a distinction without a difference. But there is a mighty difference, not which he finds, but which he makes, between man and man, that people that are peculiar to him, and the rest of the world. There are two differing excellencies by which they are distinguished in the text: Believing in God, and friendship towards him. For the matter is plain enough in itself, and you have heard it largely evinced, that this friendship cannot but be mutual; that they are not merely passive in this friendship, or the objects of it, but the subjects too. Here is this great distinguishing excellency to be found in these sort of men, that they are such as do believe in God. Abraham believed God; this is not spoken of him as a single person, but as the father of the faithful, as we may have occasion to take notice, the Scripture speaks expressly, again and again. And this is one of the characters of this people, the society of God's friends: they are a society of believers. A very great excellency, in such a world as this.

Object. But some may say in their own minds, What is there in it that doth notify and signalize such a people, as if they were upon that account more excellent than their neighbours? Methinks this believing it is but a light and trivial matter, that that should be the dignification of such a peculiar people which shall be called God's own, select and severed from al. the rest of the world. What a small matter does this believing seem to be.

Ans. Indeed it cannot but seem so, according to the notion that too generally prevails, concerning believing. With many it is but a notion, an airy thing, that hovers in their minds, but makes no impression, no more alters them than a puff of wind would do a stone wall. With

* Preached February 18th, 1669-4.

many others it is not so much as a notion. What multitudes are there that will be called Christians, but have no notion at all in their minds, correspondent to that name! No notion of the things they profess to believe. Their minds are wrapt up in a total ignorance of all the things that are to be the peculiar and most special matters of their faith. I do not wonder (when we consider what is made of faith in so great a part of the Christian world) that that of solifidian should go for so ignominious and reproachful a name. Men have made so very light and small a matter of faith, that it may very well go for a very diminishing character to be a solifidian, to be only a believer. Indeed men have reduced the business of faith to so little a trifle, that I know no reason, as to them, why solifidian and nolifidian should not signify alone to be only a believer, and no believer at all. Men have diminished even to nothing, a thing which with the most hath no object, and with the rest too generally no power, no efficacy, no spirit, no life; and it had as good be nothing, as do nothing, make no change upon their hearts.

But if it were considered what faith (the faith of the Gospel, which God calls faith, and upon which God calls believers his friends)—If (I say) it be considered what it hath in it, and what goes along with it, what it carries in it, and what it carries with it, it will appear a mighty thing, a glorious thing, and such as that one would not wonder that such a select peculiar people of God should be distinguished by it; that it should be the differencing thing, one of the main differences from the rest of the world. For it is such a thing as plucks a man quite off from all this world. Men are all ingulfed naturally in the spirit of this world. This faith severs them, raises them quite into another sphere, into an invisible world; and it is to them (wherever it is) the substance of the things that they hope for, and the evidence of the things which they see not. It plucks men quite off from themselves. It is a self-emptying thing. Divides and severs a man from himself. It is that by which he ceaseth to trust in himself, to depend upon himself, to have any confidence in himself, and so come to think the most debasingly of himself, yea, the most terribly. So that he not only despises, but he dreads himself, and flies from himself, and out of himself. And then it unites him with God and with Christ, by whom only he can take hold of God. Through Christ we believe in God. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Faith passes through Christ unto God, as the Spirit speaks, 1 Pet. i. 21. and John xiv. 1. It is that, therefore, whereby the soul seizes and possesses (according to its capacity) the all-comprehending good communicable and communicated in and by Christ. That is, Christ dwells in the heart by this faith. And thereupon souls being rooted and grounded in love, are filled with all the fulness of God. If you think but of what is carried with it, (the many things that were formerly instanced in,) they make this faith appear to be a most glorious thing in the soul wherever it hath place. It is that by which a person commits himself, intrusts himself, wholly and entirely into the hands of another. That by which it trusts one that it never saw, even with the very soul, and all its concernments. It is a venture for eternity upon this apprehension and knowledge, that if there be error or mistake in the case, it is never to be corrected, a matter never to be altered. It is a trusting with one's soul one whom we know we have offended; one of the most difficult and arduous things in the world, when we know we have displeased him, yet to trust him and cast all our care upon him; yea, upon one that doth afflict us, doth things very ungrateful to us, and who we know will at last bring us down into the very dust of death. And yet the soul saith, Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him. It is such a thing as governs the whole life of them that have it; for the just do live by it. As others live by their senses; those live by their faith upon an invisible God, an invisible Christ, and an invisible world. We know not what belongs to believing, if we understand nothing of all this, and then this faith is a riddle. It is not to be wondered at that this should be one of the peculiar and characteristical excellencies of that people whom God doth sever and make peculiar to himself from the rest of men. And their friendliness to God is another of those excellencies. And by how much the fewer his friends are, so much the nobler and more glorious a thing is it to be one of them. To bear a friendly mind towards God in a world where he is invisible, almost forgotten, and where so few regard him, look after, or concern themselves with him, this is a very peculiar excellency. That when the generality of men have their minds and hearts, their thoughts and affections, wholly engaged and taken up about things of sense, there appears so much the more of a nobler temper and spirit in these men: No, I must have somewhat else for the object of my friendly love, the love of my delight, (which is friendly love,) I must have somewhat else to delight in, and wherein to solace and finally to satisfy myself. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom do I desire on earth besides thee?" Ps. lxxiii. 25. That people that do peculiarly belong to God are distinguished from the rest of the world by very peculiar excellencies.

3. We may further learn hence, that a justified state, and a state of friendship with God, are commensurate, or do measure one another. They are of equal extent; God hath no friends but whom he justifies. And he justifies none but who are his friends. That is, he doth actually account or actually render them righteous, by imputing righteousness to them who are brought into actual friendship with him. To wit, he is then statedly in friendship with them, when there is a friendship inwrought, even in the same instant, in their hearts towards him. It is very true, indeed, we have such an expression as that of justifying "the ungodly," Rom. v. 6. So you have abundance of expressions in Scripture which must be understood just as that must. That the blind do see, the deaf do hear, and the lame do walk, and the like. That is, they who immediately before were such, are now made capable of all these acts which do bespeak another state. An ungodly man is justified; we are told in the same context that he is justified by faith: faith is not the act of an ungodly man continuing so; but as the blind are said to see, that is, sight being given to them when they were immediately before blind. And the lame to walk, to wit, who were immediately before lame, but now are made to walk. So an ungodly person is justified; one that was immediately before ungodly. But in the same instant when God imputes righteousness to him, he gives light, a new spirit, a new nature to him; for he justifies him as a believer. The word rendered "ungodly" there signifies an unworking man; but faith is the highest act of worship that the human soul is capable of. For therein I actually acknowledge and adore the truth, and wisdom, and power, and goodness of that God unto whom I intrust myself. There is no higher worship than that which is carried in faith. And therefore, that such a one should be at the same time a believer and an unworshipping person, is to say and unsay the same thing with the same breath, and even in the same words. Therefore understand the matter so, that a justified state is a state of friendship with God; which includes a friendly disposition introduced in the same instant, inwrought into our souls towards God. That faith being inwrought which would take in love, which virtually comprehends love in it, so that it doth not do its first and most essential act without the ingrediency of it; to wit, unite the soul with God in Christ. When the soul comes into that union with God in Christ, that is its conversion and union at the same time. Doth it unite with him, and retain an aversion at the same time? That is impossible. But that aversion is turned into propension, and that propension is only faith working by love. "The grace of God was exceeding abundant towards me saith the apostle, (1 Tim. i. 14.) with faith," &c. He being the fountain of all grace, and the object too of these graces. If any dream, therefore, of being in a justified state, while as yet they retain an habitual fixed aversion from God, and bear no friendly mind towards him, this is a very idle dream, a very delusive dream, a dream which, if a man awake not out of it betimes, will prove a delusion unto his ruin and destruction. It is a misrepresenting of the Christian religion throughout, to suppose that it should be only a provision made to change the states of men, without changing their hearts; to bring men into a justified estate, and yet to leave them in a state of enmity to God, and disaffection towards him, that they care not to come at him to know him, to converse with him.

This is the notion that hath so vastly spread through the

Christian world. Men think that they are justified by Christ's dying, and that they need not care, nor concern themselves, whether there be any change made in them, yea or no. But as I told you formerly upon this subject, Christ's righteousness is never the clothing of a carcass continuing so. But when he doth clothe and invest any with his righteousness, he doth put a spirit of life into them at the same time, and that spirit of life breathes in a friendly love. Men are generally justified under the Gospel upon the same terms and in the same way wherein the great father of believers was, to wit, upon their believing God. He hereupon immediately counts them righteous, but at the same time inspiring them with that friendly love towards him, which as a new vital principle habituates them and facilitates them unto all the duties and actions of that holy devoted life, that life of friendliness towards God wherein they are to spend the residue of their days.

In his first treatment with Abraham, he propounds himself to him as God-all sufficient, and at the same time draws his heart to close with him, and puts into him such a disposition with it to walk with him, and be perfect. I am God all-sufficient, "walk before me, and be thou perfect," or upright, Gen. xvii. 1. He doth not vary his method; this is his way of treatment with all others. As he dealt with the father of believers, so he hath with all believers besides. If once they are willing to abandon and quit all things else to which their sense had addicted and inclined their hearts, so as they now resolve on and close with the great objects of faith, they pass into that sphere that is composed and made up of invisible objects, such as faith hath to do with, and principally himself as he is in Christ; hereupon he imputes righteousness to them, that faith carrying in it that propension and inclination of heart to him, whereby they are made his friends, and inclined to all friendly deportment towards him afterwards. Therefore, take we heed lest any impose upon themselves with an imagination that they shall be justified, saved from condemnation, and entitled to eternal life, by only an external righteousness imputed to them without the concomitancy of a friendly disposition of heart inwrought in them towards God through Christ. And again,—

4. We may further collect hence, that by this measure a great many have very great cause to doubt and to dread their state; to have not only doubtful, but very dreadful thoughts concerning their state; for how plain a thing is it, that as God hath some friends in this world, so plain a thing is it, that he hath but few friends in this world. And then if friendship towards God and a justified state do measure one another, and are commensurate, there is too much cause for multitudes, not only to have doubtful, but very dreadful, thoughts about the state of their case. They are to make their estimate by two such things as are most eminent and obvious to any one's thoughts in friendship; that is, converse with my friend, and service to my friend: if these two things are to be the measure by which we are to make an estimate, how few friends has the blessed God in this world.

(1.) How few that care for his converse. Is not this the common account given of the temper and genius of the sons of men, and of their state together, Eph. ii. 12. "without God in the world." Let every one consult his own heart, lay his hand upon his heart, and consider;—Is not this still my case, to be without God in the world from day to day? Do not I transact my affairs without God? Do not I begin my days and end them one after another as they pass, without God? or, if I have any thing to do with him, is it as a friend? If I have any thoughts of him, are they friendly thoughts, pleasant, complacential, and reverential ones? for I can only have such if I have those that are due toward such a friend; adoring thoughts, that are thereupon grateful and pleasant as they are full of duty towards him. Do I love his presence, delight in approaching to him? Can I please myself to shut myself up in a corner, in a closet with him, to pour out my soul to him, and to receive his communications to me? How little of this is there among us! And then,—

(2.) If we consider the other thing mentioned, most eminent and obvious in friendship, service to one's friend. All that I can do is too little for my friend; his interest is my interest. He with whom I am entire in friendship, I cannot have a separate interest from. I cannot serve an interest of mine own with the neglect, much less with the disservice, of the interest of my friend. What expression is there among us of a friendly mind towards God in this kind! as the apostle speaks concerning Christ (and we cannot consider him but we must consider God in him)—"For me to live is Christ," Phil. i. 21. I have no business to live in this world but for God; I have devoted myself to him, from a principle of friendly love. This world is nothing to me, but for him; I would not covet to live in it, but upon his account, that I may know him more and serve him better, and be more conformed to him, and fitted to dwell with him for ever. Therefore serving of his interest is your business, your life is a living to God. The whole stream of all the designs and of all the actions of your life running directly towards God, that you may live to God; which doth comprehend the whole business of life; Gal. ii. 19. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." All my life is to run into him, to terminate in him; so it cannot but be, where there is a friendly mind towards him. These are trying things, and they lie in a very little compass, so that we do not need to go far if we make our judgment or estimate by the measure that hath been mentioned, what things they are that do distinguish the peculiar people of God from other men; certainly this will bring the matter to a very narrow and short issue. We say, none are in a justified state but God's friends; that friendship to God cannot be an empty name; it must signify nothing if it doth not signify these two great things, to wit, a desire of his converse, and an inclination of mind to do him all the service that we are capable of doing him, from the dictate and instinct of friendly love. I cannot be kept from him, because he is my friend. I must do for him all I can, because he is my friend. Upon all this you may also gather, what in the close and conclusion of so copious a discourse I am by way of exhortation to recommend to you, to wit, these two great things contained in the text, Faith in God, and Friendship with him.

SERMON XXXVII.*

James ii. 23.

And the Scripture was fulfilled, &c.

I TOLD you the last time, that I intended to put a period to the long discourse on this subject at this time. And herein by way of summary, I have these two great things contained in the text, seriously to recommend unto you,—faith in God, and friendship with him. I cannot suppose that, foreknowing the subject, so many should come together without a design, that if any thing should be said applicable to so great and high purposes, they will lay it up in order to future use and benefit. It would be a hard supposition, and have too much of uncharitableness in it, for me to give any place in my thoughts that you should be generally come together without any such design; I hope there are none come with so vain and wanton a mind, as only to throw away an hour here that they know not what else to do with; or to gaze at one another, or to criticise, or spend their judgment upon what they hear, without any more ado, and to go as they came.

If any two things should be pitched upon in any of our thoughts, of greater importance than other, what can you think of greater than these two which you find comprehended together in this text—faith in God, and friendship with him. It cannot be, if we have any design for eternity and another world, that we can look upon these things with neglect. Nothing can be of greater concernment; even to the judgment of your own consciences, they must appear so as they really and truly are: and, methinks, we should be all within ourselves about it. Do we think it

* Preached February 26th, 1698 4.

can go well hereafter with unbelievers, or with God's enemies? In reference to each of these, somewhat in the conclusion of this discourse is to be said, by way of direction and exhortation.—

1. As to the former, faith in God. You are not to understand this (though it be believing in God that the text speaks of) exclusive of Christ, but as including him; that is, implying and supposing him to be the mediate object of your faith, while God is pointed at as the final and ultimate object: according to the apostle, 1 Pet. i. 21. "Who through him (meaning Christ) do believe in God." Those that are believers in a Gospel sense, who through Christ do believe in God, their faith being carried through Christ as the mediator and the mediate object, unto God as the terminative and ultimate object. It was this believing in God through Christ the promised seed, that Abraham the great father of believers is characterized by in this text, and in divers other places of Scripture. And such a faith as his was you are to endeavour that you may find alive and in exercise in each of your souls. For it is not a dead faith that will pass for faith in the divine estimate, as this chapter more expressly and largely discourses. With what contempt doth it speak of a dead faith, making it but a carcass. "As the body without the spirit is dead," so as that faith that is not working, that is not energetical, that hath no energy, no life with it. So, you know, the chapter closes.

With some, I told you, it is but a notion. I fear with many besides (it may be many more) it may be less than that. Men call themselves believers when they have not such a notion in their minds of the things that they pretend to believe. With some a notional faith serves their turn; with others what is less, a mere nominal faith. It will do us no good to have that in us which we call faith, unless God calls it so too. And know, therefore, that those who have not that faith which in the evangelical sense, and by that test, will go for such, they must go among the unbelievers, let them call themselves, or let other men call them, what they will. And then for excitation in this matter, let me but offer these two awakening things to be considered.

1. That considering a man to be found an unbeliever under the Gospel, which claims and challenges his faith, that is, which claims to be believed by a correspondent faith unto what it contains and carries in it; he hath the guilt of all his other sins still continuing, and bound down close upon him. An unbelieving person is an unjustified person. So such must understand the state of the case. I have all the weight of that guilt upon me, which I have been contracting all my days. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness." Righteousness is not imputed upon other terms. Will any man think to make for himself a new Gospel, to confront that Gospel which our Lord hath sent among us? An unbeliever, and unjustified. So represent the case to yourselves. And what doth that signify? It signifies, that the holy jealous God holds me guilty of all that I have been doing against him all my days. I have lived long as "without God in the world," and he holds me guilty. I have lived to myself, and not to him, and he holds me guilty. Neglected him, disobeyed him, and lived in affront to him, and he holds me guilty. Every thing that I have used and enjoyed in this world, it hath been by usurpation; it hath been without right, as to him, without allowance. I ought to have eaten and drank, and looked up, acknowledging and adoring him whose fulness filleth all in all; but God was not in all my thoughts: and for all this he holds me guilty. I have lived a prayerless life, an ungodly life, alienated from the life of God; this hath been my way and course, and he holds me guilty. What an amazing thing is this! As long as an unbeliever, still under guilt. You have no righteousness to shelter you, to protect you, to keep off wrath and vengeance from you. But,

2. That is not all, you have a superadded (and that the greatest) load of guilt imaginable, by not believing. "He that believeth not, is condemned already," &c. That is, he to whom there is a sufficient proposal made; the object is not concealed, nor wrapt up in darkness, but set in clear and open light before your eyes, and yet you believe not. Upon how fearful terms doth such a one perish. When his case comes to be stated at the last, in the judgment of the great day, Why is such a one cast? Why is he held guilty? Why is he abandoned to perish? Why is it said to him, "Depart, accursed?" It is because he would not believe in God. He had many other sins upon him, but they would all have been forgiven him if he would have believed, if he would have taken God and his Son; then would have been a perfect peace between God and him. If his sins had been never so great, they had been all done away. But this man perisheth, because he would not believe him against sensual imaginations—against carnal inclinations. God told him it was best for him to abandon his sins, and put himself under his government, and live by his rules and holy laws; but he would not believe this, but thought it better to obey the lusts of his own heart, and walk according to his own imagination. He perisheth, because he would not believe God; because he made him a liar in that plain testimony and record he had given, concerning the way of salvation unto sinners by his Son. Against whom did "he swear in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest, but them that believed not? So we see they could not enter in, because of unbelief?" This was the great provoking wickedness of that people all along. How long will ye provoke me? How long will ye not believe me, notwithstanding the mighty noble works that have been done in the midst of you? God was manifesting himself in several and many great and remarkable instances; but yet they would not believe. They despised the pleasant land;—they believed not his word. All their wickedness was rooted in infidelity—they could not take the word of God. How fearful a case is this! When a reasonable creature, one that hath an intelligent mind and spirit about him, part of the offspring of the great Father of spirits, he would not be governed by the divine dictates, but opposed the inclination and imagination of his flesh, unto the express word of the Father of spirits. He tells me, I must live so and so, that I may do well—that I may die happy, and live eternally. But I will not believe it. I will believe the lusts of my own heart; rather run the hazard—venture it—try what will come of it. Oh! to perish on these terms is dreadful perishing, because I give the lie to him that gave me breath.

But then I must say somewhat too, by way of direction in this important matter. Is it so fearful a thing not to believe? Will not any thing that may carry with it the shadow of believing, serve the turn? But it must be faith indeed, and such as will answer the intendment of the Gospel: that I must have, or I perish as an unbeliever, whatsoever character I have gone under, or have thought myself to have. Why, how shall I do or know? Pray direct me in this, what kind of faith I must aim at, and not satisfy myself short of, or to be without? Why it must be,

1. Such (and pray, therefore, aim at such) a faith as shall admit the Gospel revelation into your hearts. This is not so obscure a thing as many, upon the first hearing, may account it. Do not you know the difference between receiving a report by your ears only, and taking it into the heart? Suppose it were of some very great good news which you hear of in any uncertain way, so as that you apprehend no reason to believe it true? It enters your ears, but goes no further. But if it be a great thing, and it comes with certainty, so as that no room of rational doubt remains concerning the truth of the matter; then it goes into your heart, and fills that with joy and pleasure and complacency. You sensibly find it exciting and raising an affection in you suitable to the import of the thing, if the Gospel be received, so that reception makes its own distinction visibly in it. "I tell you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." When the Gospel comes among you, and tells you that the great Majesty of heaven, whom you have offended, is willing to be reconciled to you, and hath sent his Son into the world on purpose to be the reconciler, and he died upon the cross a reconciling sacrifice; it is discernible, (if you will inspect and look into yourselves,) whether that which you call faith in you, of the Gospel and the Gospel revelation, make any such impressions upon your heart as is correspondent of so great a thing. It is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." That is the great business of inquiry,

What kind of faith will serve me unto righteousness, that I may be justified—that I may be counted righteous thereupon? Why, it is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 10. And saith the apostle, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief," 1 Tim. i. 15.

Have you received the Gospel revelation so, as "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation?" Is it acceptable, do you judge it worthy of your acceptation, of all acceptation? Then your heart and soul embraceth it, and closeth with it. This the apostle speaks in that great summary of the Gospel, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, (even the chief of them,) of whom I am chief."

2. Labour for such a faith as may inwardly unite your souls to Christ, revealed in this Gospel, and with God in him. Your faith is to take hold of him, and of God in him, so as thereby to come into a united state, a state of union with him, that you may thereupon be in him. It must be such a faith as whereby Christ may dwell in your hearts. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," Eph. iii. 17. That is not spoken exclusively of God, for it is presently subjoined, "that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." All which fulness is in him. Do not satisfy yourselves without such a faith as that by which you may say you have now the son of God. God in him, in you, and with you. He hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true. That understanding, to know him that is true, is faith, as it resides in the mind. But though it hath its first seat there, it doth not terminate there, for this immediately ensues, and we are in him. In whom? In Jesus Christ the Son, who is the true God, and eternal life. We pass into union by this intuition, even into union with the true God, who carries eternal life in his very name. Such a faith as leaves you still at a distance from God and from Christ, do you think that can avail you? All that is in Christ is yours, as you come to be in him. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. In him once, and all is yours; whatsoever you need, whatsoever is suitable to the exigency of your state. Are you foolish creatures, he is wisdom to you. Are you guilty creatures, he is righteousness to you. Are you impure creatures, he is sanctification to you. Are you enslaved lost creatures, he is redemption to you, if you be in him; but nothing at all if you be not in him.

3. Labour for such a faith as may be transforming to your whole souls. Consider that the whole economy of the Gospel aims at this, the bringing of all, upon whom it shall have its effect, into the unity of the faith, so that all come to unite in one faith, Eph. iv. 13. And what is to be consequent thereupon, the apostle tells you in what follows there, supposing this once to be done, and that you are brought with the rest of sincere believers into the oneness of faith, the unity of the faith which is common to serious and sincere Christians. As such then, I testify to you, that you are not to walk like other Gentiles, as if this faith, in which all sincere Christians were to unite and be one, should leave you but just like other men in your habitual frame. "I say it, and I testify to you in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind," Eph. iv. 17. You had a heart alienated from that life. Will you keep that heart still, and call yourself a believer, and pretend to be come to unity of the faith? still to live with an habitual disinclination in your heart towards God? This can never be. But if you have learned "the truth as it is in Jesus," I tell you (saith the apostle) what that must be: it must come to this, the "putting off the old man, which is corrupt by deceivable lusts," and "being renewed in the spirit of your mind," Eph. iv. 22, 23. You are never come into the unity of that faith which belongs to all that shall be saved, till there be thereupon a divestiture and total investiture. A divestiture and "putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceivable lusts;" you must cease to be the man that you were before, and (as that which is intervening and central in the case) there must be a renovation even in the spirit of your minds, a new heart and a right spirit being created and renewed in you, being renewed in the spirit of your minds, the inward seat of vital governing principles. If the spirit of the mind be renewed, that spreads influence through the man, then there is a new man put on. Not some slight, superficial change in this or that particular respect, but an entire new man. As he that is in Christ is said to be a new creature. There is a new creation introduced, the man is new. This must be, if your faith be to any purpose. The apostle blesses God for the Thessalonians, in that he could look upon them, as those that were chosen to salvation by the remarkable and observable effects. The way that God had taken with them was, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; such a believing of the truth as had been accompanied with the sanctification of Spirit. Agreeably to that of our Lord himself, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," John xvii. 17.

4. See that it be such a faith as doth and shall govern your lives, so that you live by it, and thereupon cannot only say, I did believe seven, or ten, or twenty years ago, but I continually live by my believing. A man is not said to live by that which rarely happens to him, or once or twice in a life-time. We are to live by breathing, but we cannot do so if it be not continual. So we are to live by believing; "the just shall live by his faith." That he is continually to live by all his days. Can it be thought that such a one shall be said to live now, because he drew breath twenty years ago? But that belief which is true, real, vital, will be continually repeating its acts and exercises. "The life that I live in the flesh (says the apostle) I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. That is, if your faith be a right vital principle, and such as the Gospel means and signifies by the name of faith, it is such a thing as carries up the soul into a continual course, into an invisible scene of things. There you have an invisible God, and an invisible Christ, and an invisible glory, still in view. There are some that talk of such a thing as a double sight, or a second sight, so as that they who have it have a visible world and an invisible world in view at once. I know no second sight like that of faith. That, indeed, will present an invisible world, and keep it in view before you, so that by it you will be more conversant in the world of spirits, with the Father of spirits, and with spiritual and invisible things; more conversant in your hearts, more with delight, more with savour and relish, than in this shadowy scene of things which you have within the view and under the notice of your sense. You will look upon this world "as that the fashion thereof passeth away;" but by your faith (which is to you "the substance of things hoped for," &c.) you will live above, you will live with God, you will live with Christ, you will live as on the brink and borders of eternity, ready to enter in, only waiting for a dismission hence—a call and translation thither. This is living by faith.

For, the apostle having told us, Heb. x. 38. that "the just shall live by faith," (repeating the ancient maxim out of the Old Testament, to signify to us that that is not the way of living for the saints at one time or age of the church of God only; but it is from age to age, through all the successions of time, this must be the way of believing,) then he tells us in the beginning of the next chapter, what that faith is by which such a man must live; to wit, "The substance of things hoped for," and "the evidence of things not seen." Such a faith as represents God, and Christ, and heaven, and the invisible things, all as great and most substantial realities; clothed with a clear light, and so set and continued in view before your eyes. This is, that we are to live, not to have such representations now and then, but to have them statedly before us, and so to live and direct our course accordingly. But,

2. I am also to recommend to you this other great thing, friendship with God. And in reference to that, I would also say somewhat both by way of excitation and direction. I can speak but briefly to many things. For excitation consider,

1. Is it not your great privilege to live here in this world in a state of friendship with God? for what more exalted privilege is there to poor creatures living in mortal flesh?

Here I live in flesh, dwell in flesh; but it is in friendship with God. In low circumstances, amidst a great many troubles and difficulties, but in friendship with God. Who would not choose this way of living, when it is represented to our option, when it is propounded to us as matter of choice?

2. Consider there is no middle state (for you to whom this overture is made) between these two, a state of friendship with God, and a state of enmity to him; you must be either his friends or his enemies. There can be no neutrality in this case; and will it not make a man's heart sink within him to think of this? I must either live God's friend or God's enemy. Dare I venture when the matter is laid before me as a matter of deliberation, to say, I will live the latter, I will live his enemy? you that were alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works; you see how the case is stated: you must still be enemies in your minds, through wicked works, till you are reconciled and become friends. There is no neutral state, you must go from day to day, up and down in this world, either as God's friends, or his enemies.

3. Consider that this friendship with God which we recommend to you, and into which the Gospel continually calls you, is no impossible, no impracticable thing, for it is prescribed to us as a matter of duty: "every man as he is called, let him therein abide with God," 1 Cor. vii. 24. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (John iv. 20.) which speaks this living in the love of God to be therefore more difficult, because we see him not. But the strength of the argument goes upon that supposition, that it is a thing which cannot be dispensed with, notwithstanding the difficulty: and be it as difficult as it will, it must therefore be supposed not to be impossible to live in the love of God, and in a state of friendship with him, though he be invisible. "How shall he love God?" implying that it is a thing, the thought whereof is to be abhorred, that a man should think of living in this world, and not to live in actual commerce and intercourse, to be kept up, and continued, with God in love. How shall he do it? It implies, that he must do it, and therefore the thing is by no means to be looked upon as impossible. And to pretend that it is impossible, is to pretend that we have gone below our own kind, that we have lost human nature, which, if it remain with us still, though we have flesh about us, yet our nobler part is spirit. And what, is it an impossible thing for a mind, a spirit, to converse with the great Father of spirits? Is flesh more akin to us than spirit, that supreme Spirit, that universal Spirit, that Spirit that diffuses influences every where throughout the world? Are we more akin to flesh, and fleshly things, than we are to this Spirit, whose offspring we are, and who is our Father? Therefore, it is not to be thought or looked on as an impossible or impracticable thing to come into and continue in this state of friendship with God. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for his mercy in Christ Jesus, unto life eternal," Jude 21. What is matter of express precept, is not to be looked upon simply and absolutely impossible by a natural impossibility. It is only so by a moral impotency, against which the aids of grace are to be expected and sought. And,

4. Consider that this friendship with God, as it is not an impossible or impracticable thing, so it is to be maintained in the easiest and most unexceptionable way. Consider, that to enter into this state is but to obey the Divine call, the very meaning and import of the whole Gospel of reconciliation. We have the greatest assurances in all the world, that God is not difficult or hard of acquaintance; for he invites. Will he refuse whom he invites? The Gospel is sent to us to beseech us, in Christ's name and stead, to be reconciled unto God. Will he refuse that which he seeks? decline that friendship into which he calls us? He is "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, that sin might not be imputed," or (which is the same thing) that righteousness might be imputed, 2 Cor. v. 19. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We are commissioned, and sent, and do in Christ's stead beseech you to be reconciled unto God. You may conclude, with the greatest assurance imaginable, that God is willing, and not difficult, as to entering into this state of friendship with us. And then there is as little supposable difficulty of continuing in it; for do but consider to that purpose these two things, 1. That he is never far off; and, 2. That he is easy to forgive.

1. That he is never far off. You will say, How shall I keep friendship with God? he is in heaven, I am upon earth. In heaven, yes, as to his more glorious manifestation of himself. But he is not far from any of us, for "in him we live, and move, and have our being." And this is told us, that we may seek and find him out, insomuch as he is far from none of us. So that now you may be with him as soon as you can think a thought. How easy is the way to keep up this friendship: only to be now and then at the expense of a thought. Where is God my Maker? that will not cost you dear. You have no cause to say, What shall I do for my friend? Who shall go up to heaven to fetch him me down from thence, or who shall go to the uttermost ends of the earth to fetch him me up from thence. No, he is with you; turn you but to him, and you will find him with you. Do but direct your mind, turn your thoughts inward, and you will find him with you. Indeed he often passes by, and we perceive him not. "Thou dost compass me behind and before, (saith the Psalmist,) and art acquainted with all my ways." O how unaccountable is it to keep off ourselves, unacquainted with him and his ways! And,

2. He is easy to forgive. Ay, but breaches may happen. I forget and neglect him too often, and am ashamed and confounded in my own sense; I am afraid to look towards him any more. That must not by any means be. You must return, though it be with weeping and humiliation. And if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, if it be not done trifingly, if it be not done without sense, if it be not done with an inclination and resolution to persist and go on in sin still. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," Psal. xxxii. 5. The injustice of it. And then it is added, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him," Psal xxxii. 6. Who would decline such a friendship with him who is so easy to be reconciled at first, and still willing to forgive where there is not a wilful perseverance in obstinate rebellion against his rightful authority, and his abundant love and goodness? And consider,

5. It is the way to bring your minds to ease in reference to all your more private concernments. You have difficulties in the world, you have troubles and straits, and know not which way to turn yourselves. Oh what a great thing is it to have such a friend, who invites you to cast your care upon him, for he will care for you. And then the peace of God shall hereupon keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

6. It will keep you quiet in reference to public concernments. This is a very pitiable case, that when they see things run counter to their expectations, their aims, their designs and inclinations, they are full of anxiety, full of concern, full of dread and fear. They know not what will become of things. Oh what a heart-quieting thought is it, that all is in the hands of your friend, your great and wise friend, who doeth as pleaseth him in heaven above, and in the earth beneath. And he will never manage things so, as that his true friends shall at last have any cause to complain. And then consider,

7. That all will be well for ever when you are caught up in the clouds to meet your Redeemer in the air, and to be for ever with the Lord. That being his declared pleasure, that he will have all his friends together eternally with him in one society, in one assembly, made up of an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. That they that have lived by the faith of Abraham, and been friends of God, as he was, may sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in his kingdom, and there reside for ever. In this Scripture we are told that "Abra-

ham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."

But some may say, What is that to me, who live in the world so many ages after? Why the Scriptures, as if it were on purpose to obviate any such thoughts, tell us, (particularly the apostle, Rom. iv. latter end, where he had been speaking of the same thing,) Abraham believing God, and its being imputed to him for righteouness, it was not for his sake that this was written, not for his sake alone, but for all that should believe with the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, *i. e.* as believing under the common notion of believers. Not as if our faith were to be produced, or to be maintained, by any influences from him. But he is called the father of believers upon the same account upon which any one great and eminent in a profession, is said to be the father of such, to wit, a great example, as Jabal is said to be the father of them that dwell in tents, and Jubal the father of them that handle the harp and organ. What was said concerning Abraham and his faith, and his friendship with God, thereupon, was not written for him alone, but for us too, that we are to live in the same faith and the same friendship with God as he did.

I shall shut up all, by way of direction as to this, with only two words in general. You think it a very desirable thing (I doubt not but you do) to be in this state of friendship with God. Surely every one among us must say, if it be a desirable thing to live in a state of friendship with God, who would not live at this rate every day in a state of friendship with the great and glorious God of heaven and earth! I shall only say these two things by way of direction in reference hereto.

1. Give yourselves up entirely unto this friendship with God; and do it with solemnity: so great a thing as this, entering into friendship with God, the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth, the matter speaks itself that it ought to be done with solemnity. Make a solemn business of it; apply yourselves purposely to him, and tell him, Lord, I have heard thy mind, thy pleasure, thou wouldst have souls that have wandered from thee, and been alienated, come into thine acquaintance and friendship. The Gospel under which I live hath told me so; I believe thy word; I come now to offer myself up unto thee, to be thy reconciled one, thy devoted one, thy servant, thy friend. "Thy servant, thy servant; O Lord thou hast broken my bonds," Psal. cxvi. 16. But our Saviour would have us know, that the notion of a servant is not to exclude that of a friend, as that of a friend is not to exclude the notion of a servant, but only to prevail and predominate in the state. The notion of friendship is in the Christian state to be predominate, and to be the principal thing. Tender yourself to God accordingly. We hear many discourses to this purpose; but with too many the matter comes all to nothing, because we never make a solemn business of it. The entrance into such a state, so sacred a state, if it were done with solemnity, there would stand a remark upon it, I have engaged myself in a state of friendship with God, I must live pursuantly hereunto. I hope you will think of this; such as come to learn how you might live in a state of friendship with God. Such as have any such design, I hope will think of this another time; *i. e.* that when this state of friendship with God is once entered into, we must give ourselves up to it. And then,

2. Mind it is a continued course; otherwise, you trifled at first; never meant sincerely, never meant as you did pretend. Mind, I say, it is a continued course; And through your whole course. These are but generals; I have mentioned many particulars, at former times, to this purpose; that, if you recollect yourselves, would be of stated use to you. But all will come under this general; mind this often, that there is a friendship settled between God and me; I must in all things hereupon demean myself towards him as a friend; that is, I must consult him in all, resign all things to him, cross him in nothing; for friendship between him and us carries a peculiarity in it. If there were an equality between him and me, then it were something as between human friends, it may be. They may be equally wise, they may be equally great or equally mean; equally able to do for one another. But this is not the case here; this is not like common friends, as I formerly showed at large; and, therefore, there must be a constant reference to him in all things. We are in all things to yield to him, to cross him in nothing. And so, when in all things we are to consult him, we are to take his counsel in all, and to stand in his counsel. Not to be self-willed, not to say, we will walk in the way of our own hearts, whatsoever becomes of our friendship with him. You must always be true to him; you must always believe him true to you. You must never be strange to him: always be free, unreserved, open-hearted. You must willingly agree to it, that he be privy to all your affairs. He will be so, whether you will or no, but it is that to which your hearts should consent, and in which your hearts should rejoice, so as to be able to say, Lord! I know I can hide nothing from thee, and I would not if I could; I desire all things may lay open between me and thee, that there may be nothing hid, no veil drawn between thee and my soul. Search me, try me, look into me. It is the pleasure and advantage of this friendship, to know that he can behold sincerity, and accept it, and reward it, and delight in it. And, therefore, you must resolve never to break off this friendship, but look upon him as your inseparable friend, and from whom you are never to depart. And say to yourself, this God shall be your God; *i. e.* your friend, your friendly ruler, for ever and ever, and shall be your guide even unto death. So that you can never any moment of your life suffer an elongation from him that he should be far off, or keep long from you, but presently your hearts will miss him. And you will say, Oh! where is my friend? I will seek him, pursue after him, as the spouse in the Canticles is represented to pursue after him whom her soul loved. This is my friend, where is he? where is he? You will be presently upon inquiries, if he have hid himself, and seem to have withdrawn and retired from you; for this hath been the state of things between him and you in contracting this state of friendship, that this God shall be your God for ever and ever, and your guide even unto death.

* Preached March 11th, 1693.

SERMON XXXVIII.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

The subject that I last finished, you find did connect faith and friendship with God. This connects faith and sonship to God. And the one and the other must be understood (by them that will consider) to be of the greatest importance to us imaginable; so great that it is to be hoped the former is not forgotten, and this latter will not slightingly and negligently be attended to.

The words in themselves are an express doctrinal assertion, which I shall not need therefore to vary into other terms; "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." It needs only to be explained and applied; for the explication of it, that you cannot, upon the first hearing of such an assertion as this, but think very necessary. For it may seem strange to unaccustomed ears, at least, that such a thing as this should be affirmed so generally, concerning believing Jesus to be the Christ, that every such a one should be said to be born of God. How amazing a sound may this carry with it to many who do less consider, or who understand less what the meaning of these terms is, to "believe Jesus to be the Christ," and to "be born of God;" the latter of these doth indeed, at the very first hearing, appear a very great thing—be born of God! It might even swallow up a man's soul to think of such a thing as this, affirmed, of such worms as we are. We, that might "say to the worm, Thou art our father, and to corruption, Thou art our sister and mother;" to speak of such creatures as we, as of a divine offspring and heavenly progeny, as of persons born of God; how wonderful and transporting may it be to us!

But that only which can make such an assertion as this

seem strange is, that while this is apprehended (as it is to be really and truly) a very great thing; for the most part, such believing is reckoned a very little thing. It may, indeed, seem a great thing to be a son of God, one born of God; but the name of believing is become so cheap amongst us, and carries so little and so diminished a sound with it, that we are too generally tempted to look upon it as a slight, and small, and trivial matter. But when these terms come to be opened and understood, it will be found that there is such a near affinity between these two things, being "born of God," and "believing that Jesus is the Christ;" that the one will be easily understood not to have any place at all where the other hath no place; that they can never be apart, but wheresoever the one is the other must be too.

Our business therefore in the explication must be to do these two things; first, to consider the parts of this assertion; and then, secondly, to show their necessary connexion with one another.

I. We are to open the parts of this assertion severally, which you see are these two, concerning Christ and a divine birth; "believing that Jesus is the Christ," and being "born of God." And,

1. For the former of these, what the import is of "believing that Jesus is the Christ." And as touching that, there are again, more particularly, two things to be stated. First, the thing to be believed, that Jesus is the Christ; and, secondly, the believing of this.

(1.) The thing to be believed, that Jesus is the Christ. I pray you attend to it. Much of the greatness of this thing, which is our present subject, to wit, faith concerning him, depends upon a right understanding what it is that must be the object of this faith, and which is stated as the object of it here. The thing to be believed is, that Jesus is the Christ. It concerns us greatly to understand this aright. It is not a trivial matter that is here represented to us as the object of our faith, or the thing we are to believe. And that we may more distinctly apprehend it, we are yet to go lower, and to consider, first, the subject of this affirmation unto which we are to yield our assent, and give up our faith, which is represented to us only under one single term, Jesus; and then, secondly, what we are to believe of this subject, that he is the Christ.

[1.] The very subject itself must be truly stated; we must in our own thoughts determine of the person here spoken of, and concerning whom this affirmation is pronounced, otherwise we do nothing. Why, who is this Jesus of whom we are to believe that he is the Christ? Take we heed that our thoughts do not wander here; for that would be fatal if they should, if they should wander to another subject. This, which is so peculiarly said concerning him, must be understood exclusively of any one else; it is not spoken of any other, nor to be thought of any other. That there should be here an error *personæ*, a mistake concerning the person spoken of, it may prove a most destructive error. "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" This is the question which John directs his disciples to put to Christ for their information, not for his own, that he might gain them an opportunity of being convinced and satisfied in the great and important question of that age; which yet could not be of greater importance to that age than it is to our own, nor of greater to John's disciples than it is to every one of us: and we see what our Lord saith to it, "Tell John what you hear and see;" such and such wonders are wrought and done. And he adds in the close of all, "Blessed is he that is not offended in me;" which words would carry a kind and benign import with them beyond all that can be expressed. But they carry withal an intimated menace, as any one may apprehend—"Blessed is he that is not offended in me;" as if he should have said, Such a one hath a merciful and wonderful deliverance, "he that is not offended in me." But it is also as if he nad said, Wo be to him that is; when so clear a light shines concerning me, and when there is so bright and so express a discovery; blessed is he that doth not stumble, blessed is he that doth not mistake, that doth not take one for another. The intimation is plain, nothing but wrath and vengeance and wo must hang over the guilty heads of them that do take one for another in such a case; and when the light that shines is so clear, so as that none can be guilty of a mistake, but it must be a wilful mistake if any should take another for me.

And you see how this one person is notified here, only by the name Jesus, as the subject of the affirmation, the Saviour. A name that signifies the aptitude of the person unto the office that he was to bear and manage. You know it was foretold and directed by the immediate counsel of Heaven, that he should be called Jesus; "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins," Matt. i. 21. It was a rivalling of the hero of the world, who did affect such titles, and even that very title, which the pagans did therefore bestow sometimes upon their gods, and sometimes upon their kings, to wit, Saviour; the usual name among them of Jupiter, and with which some of their great princes did dignify themselves, and affected to be dignified by, as particularly Demetrius Soter. This was an affectation among the great ones of the world to claim this very name. Well, our Lord will be known to be the Jesus. This name is his, appropriated to him, to signify to persons one that is to save as no other could, that was to be so eminent and so glorious a Saviour; that person distinguished from others by the specifying circumstances (or the individuating circumstances rather) that did attend him. That Jesus who was born at Bethlehem, and lived at Nazareth, and was crucified at Jerusalem, commonly known there by this name, the name Jesus. It is of him peculiarly and alone that this is said, he is the Christ.

[2.] And that is the thing that is to be believed concerning him, that he is the Christ. The former was the personal name, this the name of office, and speaks of the person as invested with his office, or affirms that investiture concerning his office that he is invested therewith. This indeed is variously expressed, that is the attribute given to the subject under this latter name. Sometimes the same thing is said concerning the believing this Jesus to be the Son of God; that doth equally entitle to the same great privilege, and brings a man into the same safe state, implies the same change and transformation upon his soul, as you see in the foregoing chapter of this epistle at the 15th verse, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Sometimes the meaning and import of this expression, "is the Christ," is signified by that conjunction with the other, both conjoined, that is, that he is the Christ, and that he is the Son of God. When our Lord demands of Peter, "Whom say ye that I am?" (Matt. xvi. 15.) the various opinions are given, some saying he was Elias, some saying some other of the prophets. Well, but what say you, Peter, and the rest, that I am? "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," saith Peter. So you have both conjoined in reference to the same person, as in John xx. 31. "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." These passages plainly intimate to us thus much, that to affirm that Jesus is the Christ, and that he is the Son of God, comes all to one, it amounts to the same thing. To say concerning this person believingly that he is the Christ, or that he is the Son of God, there is an equivalency in the one of these to the other. Sometimes a third expression, of equal import to either of the others, or both the others, is used; "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." A strange saying too, as this of the text seems to be, 1 Cor. ii. 3. there "Lord" is the name of the office too; the usual style by which he is spoken of in the New Testament, and in some places of the Old too; "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," Psal. cx. 1. It only imports that universal and sovereign dominion that did belong to the mediatorial office, the thing signified by the name of Christ. "He is Lord of all," Acts x. 36. A thing that seems slid in by the apostle in the stream and current of his discourse; "he is Lord of all," saith he, in a parenthesis; and so he goes on, dropping that by the way; and no man can say that he is so "but by the Holy Ghost," to wit, with a correspondent disposition of soul internally, vitally, and practically acknowledging him, and subjecting his soul to him as Lord of all, as the Lord,

he into whose hands all power is put both in heaven and earth.

But when this is said, "that Jesus is the Christ," and this again is used as an equivalent expression, "that he is the Son of God," or, "he is Lord of all," this only represents and gives us an intimation of the state of the case at that time. He appearing now in the fulness of time upon the stage of this world, various opinions there were of him, some mistaken ones, some very malicious ones, and some that were right and true; this begat a great controversy; it was the question of the time, and the determination of it the right way called the present truth; to wit, the great question concerning this Jesus, who, and what he was; "I speak these things," saith the apostle, "though you know and are established in the present truth." The main dispute lay between them on the one hand, who believed him to be the Christ, or the Son of God; and them on the other hand, who apprehended him to be a deceiver, an impostor and blasphemer, for saying truly who and what he was. This was the true state of the question, he giving out himself to be the Son of God, calling the great God upon all occasions, Father—"My Father" hath directed me to do so and so, and to say so and so: he giving this out concerning himself, that he "came down from heaven," that he was "the Son of God," in a most peculiar and appropriate sense; and reporting concerning himself too, (which was of most absolute necessity unto the end and design of his coming,) that he might bear the office of Christ and the Messiah, and that he was the Son of God, the determining the one of these on his part would determine and conclude the other. Whereas he did upon all occasions intimate that he was the very person that should come, the Christ, the Messiah, and also that he was the Son of God. If it were true that he was the Son of God, it was impossible that could be false that he was the Messiah, that he was the Christ. For no one could imagine that the Son of God should bring down a lie from heaven and diffuse it among men: therefore to say he was the Son of God, was to say he was the Christ too; that is, it plainly implied that whereas he said both, it was impossible he could be the author unto men of a false affirmation concerning himself: and therefore, if he were the Son of God, he in whom the Divine nature was in conjunction with the human, in whom the glory of God shone so as to characterize him the only-begotten of the Father, (John i. 14.) if it were so avowing himself to be the Christ, the Messiah that was to come, that had been so long expected, even at that very time, he must truly and really be so. And so there was no medium between these two, his being the Son of God, and his being a deceiver and impostor; no medium, for if he was not the one, he was the other; if he was not the Son of God, he must deceive in saying he was the Christ. But he being the Son of God, that being sufficiently evinced, or evident that he was so, must give sufficient credit to this affirmation concerning himself, that he was also the Christ, he that was to come, so as that there was not another to be looked for.

Now what this Christ signifies, and what the affirming this Jesus to be the Christ must import, have been hinted to you already. But it is to be more distinctly considered. It is (as you have heard) a name of office, as the other is a personal name. And this word signifies his unction to that office; so Messiah signifies, in the Hebrew language, and Χριστος in the Greek, an anointed person, and the import of that must be collected from the known usage of this and of former ages, and the continued usage of the same thing, even to this day, in all successive ages since; that is to invest and inaugurate persons into high and great offices by unction or anointing. And two things, as to this person, this unction must signify, when it is said he was anointed above his fellows with joy and gladness, to wit, with triumph, (as high triumphs have been always used to attend the inauguration or coronation of princes,) two things as to him this unction must signify: 1. Authorization, and, 2. Qualification. The former of these is relative, and the latter real.

First, Authorization; the conveying to him all the authority belonging to the high office of Mediator. He is the person authorized, (as the inauguration of princes signifies that,) either conferring or acknowledging the high authority in them belonging to their high office. Him hath God the Father sealed. He carries the signature, the character of the great God upon him, as his anointed one, his sealed one, marked out for the great work and office which he was to sustain and bear. But,

Secondly, It signifies qualification too. A real endowment, as well as that relative one. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me," Isaiah lxi. 1. It signifies that mighty plenitude of the Spirit which descended and flowed down upon him, whereby whatsoever was requisite to the faithful and successful discharge of the work and business which was conferred upon the man Christ, the Divine nature being so intimately united with the human, it signified that all the fulness of Godhead did come to inhabit this man, and so to suit him every way for the great affairs of that high and important office into which he was now put.

And this was the thing to be believed in opposition to the opposers of that time, and of all after-times; who were of two sorts then as they have been continually since, to wit, pagans and Jews; the former whereof did disbelieve that there needed to be any Messiah at all; and the latter disbelieved that this was he. The former could have no apprehension that there was any need of a Messiah or a Christ at all. That was the case of the pagan world; and much less could they believe that this Christ should ever need to be crucified: and therefore the doctrine of him, and especially of his cross, was to the wise pagans foolishness. What needs any such transaction between God and men in such a way as this, that there were come down one from heaven into this world, to die upon earth a sacrifice to the justice of Heaven? Who can imagine such a thing as this, say the wiser pagans. There is no need of any Christ at all, say they.

The Jews, they were taught long before to apprehend and believe there was need of a Christ; though they mistook much here what he was to do, and what the business of his office and coming was; but yet they had that Gospel among them, under veils and shadows and typical representations, which did only hold forth to them what was the business and errand upon which Christ came into the world. All their sacrifices taught them, and no doubt to whom an understanding was given, as this apostle's expression afterwards is in this same chapter, "They who had the given understanding to know him that is true," verse 20. they did understand that the sacrifices under their law, and offered according to the direction of it, must terminate in one greater sacrifice. They had that volume in their hands concerning which it is said, Ps. xl. 6, 7. "In the volume of the book it is written of me, that when sacrifices and offerings will not serve the turn, (that is, of mean, abject, brute creatures,) I must come after all to do thy will, O God." That is to be performed and done by me which those sacrifices were useless and insignificant for; no other way useful but as they did point out me, who was to come, as the substance and fulness and accomplishment of them all. It was a thing generally taught, (whether it were understood or no among the Jews,) that there was to be a Christ, a Messiah, an everlasting high priest, as his office is sometimes dignified by that title, more eminently and principally in Psalm cx. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." This the Jews found in the sacred records which they had among them, and in their hands. But yet when he came, they did not think this was he. And so as that was a question between the pagans and Christians, whether there ought to be any Christ or no, so it was a question of equal importance between them and the Jews, whether this were the person. And therefore that he doth with so much authority and severity charge upon those that he conversed among in the days of his flesh, If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins. It is not believing an indefinite Christ or Messiah to come, that will serve the turn now, now that there is a sufficient notification of the person; but now you are not only to believe that there is a Messiah to come, but now if you do not believe that I am he, you are lost creatures, you die under the unatoned guilt of all your other sins, and under the superadded guilt of this sin, not believing the revelation that is made by the great God of this his Christ, when it was made with so much clearness that it was im-

possible any discovery could have carried more convictive evidence with it than that did. This now was the thing to be believed concerning this Jesus. But then, you will say,

(2.) What doth the believing of this import? What is it to believe it, so as to give a ground for this affirmation concerning the belief of it, that he is born of God? Why, for this it is plain, in the

First place, this believing that Jesus is Christ must carry with it an understanding and a judicious assent of the truth of the affirmation that so he is; that he is indeed the Christ. An understanding and judicious assent: it cannot be less. Faith concerning this so important a thing is not the act of a fool, it must be an act suitable to an intelligent, apprehensive mind; and therefore if this be not assented to with the understanding and judgment, it is as if it were not assented to at all. To assent to this, understandingly and with judgment, is to apprehend some valid and sufficient ground upon which it is to be assented to. I pray consider this well; ungrounded faith is no faith: if there be never so clear and demonstrative ground upon which this truth is in itself founded, that Jesus is the Christ; if it be not at all apprehended by me, if I believe this at random, if men will call that believing when I believe and I cannot tell why, and I care not why, I believe as a matter of common hearsay or of uncertain report, I take it up from the people amongst whom I live. Such an ungrounded faith as this is a nullity, a perfect nullity, it goes for nothing; it is not believing, it is but a hovering, fluttering opination, a vague opinion only I met with by chance, a thing that falls in my way; my religion, as I am a Christian, is to me a casualty. I am a Christian, but upon the same terms upon which they who live in the same country are Mahometans; and of the Jews, where they are of the Jewish faith, or infidelity rather. And this is all that the most have to say for their being Christians: that religion which was the religion of my forefathers, which is the religion of the country where I live, which is the religion established by law, which is the religion that most suits my external conveniences to profess. I could not commodiously (it may be not safely) live in the country where I live, save on this profession, and not continuing this profession. That which is the ground of the belief of the most that go under the name of Christians, is but just the same, *mutatis mutandis*, that is the ground of their faith and religion who inhabit the pagan world, in all the most dark and dismal quarters of it; they take their faith the same way. The Mahomedans, though less gross pagans, take up their faith the same way. And so have the Jews done their faith the same way ever since Judaism came to be opposed to Christianity: therefore there must be some great flaw in this matter.

Most certain it is, that such grounds as do equally serve to infer falsehood and truth must be in themselves false. From truth nothing but truth can follow; but from falsehood sometimes that which is true, and sometimes that which is false (as circumstances may be varied) will follow. And it is plain, that from this ground a falsehood doth follow many times and often, yea oftener than truth. To wit, when the ground is that my religion is descended from my ancestors, it is the religion of the country where I live, it is established by law, it makes for my conveniency to be of this religion, it would be a great prejudice or reproach to me not to be of it, or profess the contrary. These grounds will as well infer a falsehood, as they happen to do truth in the present case, because they are common grounds upon which all the mistaken and false religions in the world are equally founded as well as the true.

But then if the matter be so, see what you are to account or reckon concerning such an ungrounded faith, be the matter of it what it will; if the grounds of it be false and wrong it is vain faith, as it is intimated by the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. "I declare unto you the Gospel which ye have believed, which you have received, which hath been preached to you, and wherein you stand, and by which also you shall be saved, if you keep in the way that I have preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain." The Greek word there used signifies sometimes *temere*; sometimes *frustra*; when it signifies the former, it is believed without ground; when it signifies the latter, it is believing without effect. Both ways faith may be vain. When I believe a thing without any ground, or without any proportionate ground, that is, I believe a divine truth, but with no divine faith, or not relying in my belief upon a divine testimony, which is the thing that specifically distinguisheth divine faith from human faith. The faith is as the ground of it is. If my faith rest upon a human testimony, it is a human faith; if it rest upon a divine ground, then it is a divine faith, and the efficacy of it is proportionable to the ground of it. Do but observe that, 1 Thess. ii. 13. the apostle gives thanks for those Thessalonians, "that they received the Gospel not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God, which effectually works in them that believe." We can never believe aright that Jesus is the Christ, but as taking it upon the authority of a divine testimony. "He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he believeth not the record he hath given of his Son." Why do I believe Jesus to be the Christ? because the eternal God hath given his testimony concerning him that so he is. This never enters into the minds of the most. They never consider who testifies this; only this is a common opinion, and they have happened upon it. But a testimony from heaven concerning him, hath averred and affirmed him to be the Christ, is that which must take hold of men's souls, and come with power upon them, if ever they do in truth believe that Jesus is the Christ. A man's believing comes all to nothing without this, that there is a divine testimony. But how such a divine testimony is to be evidenced to be divine, or may appear to be so, will be matter of after-consideration, as that also will, what is imported in being born of God. Such a faith as the Gospel requires, and challenges to this truth, that Jesus is the Christ, it carries that mighty and marvellous power along with it as to transform a man's soul, to make him a new man. Any man that pretends to this faith, he is but just as he was before; the same man that he was, as vain, as earthly, as carnal, as strange to God, he lives at the same rate of ungodliness that formerly he did, or that other men actually do; for this man to pretend he believes that Jesus is the Christ, it is a pretence that carries its own confutation and shame in it.

He that understandingly believes Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, that understands why he believes it, and what this Christ was appointed for, to reconcile, to reduce us, and bring us back to God, to entitle to the divine favour, and to engage us in the divine communion; such a man as doth in good earnest believe this, is quite another man, as if he were but new born. Here is a creature produced that was not before; it is as if you were newly come into the world, and into being. If you do sincerely and truly believe that Jesus is the Christ, it is a thing that speaks you just new born; that is, you are born quite another creature; as we shall have occasion further to show. "Old things are done away, and all things are become new." This faith cannot be unaccompanied with such an impression on the soul, that makes a man a godlike creature in comparison to what he was before; for every one that is born of God is like God by that very birth. It is true, that a thing may be made by another that is not like him, but what one begets or is born of him that hath the same nature, that bears his natural image; it is a creature new-produced, that intimates God, that resembles God, in whom this faith obtains concerning Jesus that he is the Christ.

I have chosen to insist upon this subject upon that account, and with this design, (as many things have been spoken of the same import, and upon the same design from time to time,) that we may not impose upon ourselves, and be cheated by the name of faith instead of the thing. Will the shadow of faith save a man? Will it save a man to be called a believer, and to be no such thing? That faith that terminates upon Jesus as the Christ, which will save a man, must so transform him too, so as that he may truly admit to have it said of him, this is a man born of God. I see his faith makes him quite a new man throughout; for he was a stranger to God, an enemy to God, lived in all manner of ungodliness; but O! what a change is wrought! Now he resembles God, now he doth like God; he makes it his business to do good; the divine excellencies shine in him, and are conspicuous wheresoever he goes, and in whatsoever he does. To talk of one believing Jesus to be

the Christ, who doth not appear to be born of God, doth not appear to be of a heavenly descent or birth, you may as well say such a one is a star, or an angel, as a believer. A believer, and one born of God, are expressions that do signify alternately one another as broad as long; so that every believer is born of God, and that every one that is born of God is a believer.

SERMON XXXIX.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I HAVE spoken to the general ground of this believing Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, upon that testimony which God hath given concerning him, that so he is.

But then there are many subservient grounds which have that use to notify us to the divinity of this revelation, or of this record; or whereupon we have reason to judge the testimony divine. And they are such as these:

[1.] The many prophecies that went before of him. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy, Rev. xix. 10. God speaking by the mouth of all his prophets (as if all had but one mouth) concerning his Christ; so conscient and agreeing was their testimony, though in several successive ages. "Of him bear all the prophets witness," Acts x. 43. "And which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One;" as dying Stephen speaks, Acts vii. 52. It would be a long business, and (I hope) among you not necessary, to recite all the prophecies, more ancient and more late, which were in the several ages given concerning Christ before he came. He refers himself to all the Scriptures that were then in his time extant, to wit, those of the Old Testament, and those particularly of Moses. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think to have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me," John v. 39. He must refer there principally to the prophetical writings contained in those writings. And he afterwards runs back as high as Moses, the penman of the first sacred writings. Moses (saith he) wrote of me, verse 46. But if ye will not believe Moses' writings, how will you believe my words? Great prophecies there were concerning him, even in the writings of Moses; and he wrote of times far back, even from the beginning, for he spake of 2000 years and upwards, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head; a plain prophecy concerning this same Jesus, and that he was to be the Christ. That the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh should come; and that to him the gathering of the people should be. And how many express prophecies do you find concerning him afterwards in the books of the Psalmists. "Why do the heathen rage?" The most express quotation that we have out of the Old Testament, that we have any where in the New, as to what afterwards follows in that Psalm, the apostle, Acts xiii. quotes particularly the second Psalm, saying, concerning this his Christ, against whom the heathen did rage, even as they did against the Father; "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The things that were said of him after he did come, to wit, that he was Lord of all. This was predicted and foretold concerning him so long before, that the heathen, and all the ends of the earth, should lie within the compass of his vast territory and dominion. Too great indeed to be called a territory: for all power was given him in heaven and in earth. He is Lord of all. It would be endless to recite all the passages to you which have this manifest application. It was foretold concerning him by the prophets, that two natures were to meet in his person. An admirable discovery, and a most express and plain one, that is, that one and the same person was to be born a child, and to be the mighty God. Isaiah ix. 6. "To us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and he shall be called Wonderful, The mighty God, The everlasting Father." In reference to us, he fitly hath that title too. Not in reference to the Trinity, but in reference to us. His divine original was plainly there presignified to us, as in other texts of the Old Testament. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand." And the land which he had a more peculiar relation to, is called "Emmanuel's land, God with us." That his goings forth are said to be "from everlasting," even his, who was to be born at Bethlehem, Mic. v. 2. Many most circumstantial things, as well as those great and substantial ones, were predicted and foretold; the punctual correspondence whereunto of the event did most plainly declare the divinity of the testimony. That is, that those were most divinely inspired prophets, who could at so vast a distance of time testify such and such things concerning him. Well might the Spirit of prophecy, working in those prophets, be called the testimony of Jesus. As when the parting of his garments by lot, before spoken of, the piercing of his hands and feet, the giving him gall and vinegar to drink, with many more such things; and that he should be born at Bethlehem, when, as that was a casualty, humanly speaking it was no more than so, his mother being surprised upon a journey, and passing through that place. But these things I must not insist upon.

[2.] It speaks the divinity of that testimony given concerning him, that he entered in so extraordinary a way into this world. I may in the highest sense say, that he had so illustrious a birth. Illustrious, not by any thing of lustre derived and borrowed from this earth; that was too mean a thing to make his birth illustrious; but as he was of heavenly descent, the illustriousness of it was by a light and glory which did accompany it from heaven. His birth was not signalized by the state and pomp of embassies from the courts of we know not how many princes; but by the descent of multitudes of glorious angels, proclaiming it as "glad tiding of great joy" which should be to all people; and an extraordinary star, which signalized this, and which was the guide to those wise sages who by special divine instinct came to do a homage to him, not without a secret signification of that right he was to have in the remotest parts of the world, and all the world over. They came from far to pay that homage, and to signify that his dominion should be far and near. And,

[3.] His most divine and heavenly doctrine was mightily subsidiary unto this record of God concerning him, that he was the Christ and his own Son; for how did he often, when he spake, transport his hearers! How were they astonished sometimes at his doctrine, (as Matthew vii. latter end,) for there were such characters did attend it as manifestly did distinguish it. He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes, though they were authorized teachers among that people too. The ear that heard him blessed him, and the eye that saw him bare witness to him. You find, Luke iv. 17. that when he had pitched upon a text in one of the synagogues, to wit, that of Isaiah lxi. 1. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor;" when he came to dilate upon that subject, all the assembly are amazed, wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. And when the officers are sent to apprehend him, and bring him before the judicature at Jerusalem, they come back confounded men, without their errand's end; they are examined, and inquired why they had not brought him? say they, "Never man spake as this man; a divine person, we dare not touch him, we dare lay no hand upon so sacred a one as he appears to be." And,

[4.] The wonderful works, which, through the whole course of his ministration, after he began, he continually did to testify and bear witness to the truth of what he repeatedly affirmed concerning himself, that he was Christ. When John's disciples were sent to him (not for John's sake, but their own) to know, "Art thou he that shall come, or shall we look for another?" (Matt. xi. 3.) he

* Preached March 19th, 1692.

gives them an answer from what they might see and hear, "Go and tell John the things that ye see and hear; (that is;) The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." Implying all this to be a sufficient testification who he was. And those words, (though they are mild and soft, and palmy and pleasant,) "Blessed is he that is not offended in me," yet they carry a sting in them—they breathe terror too; for this plain intimation is carried in them, "Wo to him that is offended when so clear light shines, when there is so plain and manifest a discovery who I am: fearful is the case of that man who stumbles, takes offence, and cannot see when so bright light shines upon him, revealing me." Unto these words of his he makes his frequent appeal, in his many conflicts with the Jews, when they charge him with the solitariness of his testimony. "Thou bearest witness of thyself, thy witness is not true." That he disclaims; though justly tells them too, that if he did bear witness of himself, yet his witness was true. But he did not bear witness of himself singly and alone; "My Father beareth witness of me, and the works that I do they bear witness of me." And he returns it upon them, "If another comes in his own name, him will ye believe: I come in my Father's name, and ye will not receive me," John v. 43.

[5.] The express vocal testimony (besides that stated one that we have in the sacred records) given again and again from heaven concerning him, at three noted times, his birth, his baptism, and his transfiguration. At his birth, by the embassy of angels, of which you have heard so much already; at his baptism, when the Holy Ghost descended as a dove lighting upon him, and that voice was heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." To be that Son of God and the Christ, (as the case is stated,) you have heard, must signify the same thing. They are put together often, "Christ the Son of the living God," Matt. xvi. 16. "Christ, the Son of God," Mark i. 1. That being the great question of that time. He avowing himself to be the Son of God; they charging him, who were his enemies, to be a deceiver and impostor: when that point indeed was gained, that he was the Son of God, no deceiver, no impostor, that must consequently include necessarily that he was the Christ; because that he always testified concerning himself. And if he were the Son of God, he could not be the author of a false testimony, or of an injurious usurpation of a dignity and office that belonged not to him. And at his transfiguration, how solemn and how glorious was the vocal testimony from heaven concerning him, when he took up, not all the disciples, but a competent number, (in common human estimate two or three being sufficient to prove the truth of a matter of fact in such a case,) he takes such a number as might certify the rest, and so publish the whole business to the world, when it should be seasonable and consistent with the design of such a manifestation as that was. When he had Peter, James, and John with him in the mount, where he was transfigured before them; and then, as the apostle Peter (who was one of the number, and an eye-witness) doth himself testify, 2 Pet. i. 17. and tells us what he had seen with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears. Many of you may remember I insisted largely heretofore upon that context. "We have not followed (saith he) cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came to him such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." What place could there be left for reasonable doubt, whether God did not sufficiently own this Jesus to be the Christ, when there came "such a voice from the excellent glory" concerning him, to this same purpose, notified and testified as any matter of fact ought to be. And then,

[6.] His most amazing death, with so tremendous circumstances as the Gospel reports it; such as that, though he could not be brought to it but by consent, till he was pleased in order thereunto to retract the glorious beams of his Majesty, that they might not withhold and frighten those, that were to be the executioners of that horrid tragedy, from doing the thing itself which the hand and counsel of God had determined should be done. He is therefore said not to have his life taken from him; to wit, whether he would or no, but "he laid it down." There must be consent in the case; otherwise, had he let out those beams of majesty continually that shone so illustriously in him, even in the very confines of that hour and power of darkness that was coming upon him, they had not dared to do it. You see that the assassinates, that they are even at the first attack beaten aback by those appearances of him, those characters of divinity, that some way or other appeared, and their own dread, that they fall flat to the ground; so that he is constrained to veil himself, and draw some kind of cloud over that glory, that they might not be withheld from going on; though it was a thing that he must spontaneously yield to, or it could not have been done. But when he did yield to it, and it was done, with what amazing circumstances was it attended, that all might know how extraordinary a person he was! Immediately the sun withdraws his head. Such an eclipse ensues, the like whereof was never know in the world besides; and of which some noted pagan writers give an account with wonder. The powers of heaven are shaken, so as that from that great pagan these words were extorted, "That either the God of nature suffered, or the whole frame of things is suffering a dissolution." The earth is shaken and torn; the graves are opened, and the dead arise, many of them, and go into the holy city. The Roman centurion, a pagan, (who was by office to superintend the execution,) upon the sight of all this, gives him the cause against the assassinates and murderers; to wit, that whereas this was the question, Is he a deceiver, or is he the Son of God? This was the question on which he died. He gives him the cause, saying, "Verily this is the Son of God." He speaks it in reference to the controversy then agitated and on the stage. What is this man, that here is dying, affixed to this cross? Was he what the Jews averred him to be? or was he what he averred himself to be? Why that is decided on his side by this impartial pagan. And,

[7.] His glorious resurrection, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and that upon which the stress of the whole cause was all along after laid. And it was the whole business of the apostleship to bear witness to his resurrection. They were twelve of them. A sufficient number to testify that they had often seen him when arisen. The highest testimony that God could from heaven have given concerning him; that when he died under that false and malicious imputation, as a deceiver and blasphemer, that Heaven might own him to be what he said he was. Though it was necessary he should be permitted to die, yet he recovers, and is raised up from the dead, and made a glorious triumph over death; the pangs whereof it was impossible should hold him, and therefore they are loosed; the pangs and bonds of it could hold him no longer. And,

[8.] The wonderful fortitude and boldness wherewith his inspired disciples and apostles did testify concerning his resurrection afterwards, and that he was the Christ. That was the business of the apostolical office, to bear witness to his resurrection; Matthias was chosen to fill up the number, and join with the rest to bear witness to the resurrection of our Lord, that all the world that way might know who and what he was. With great boldness did the apostles bear witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and a divine presence was with them herein. They testified it from time to time, even to the very faces of those powers under which he suffered; by whose instigation, at least, if not by their authority. The sanhedrim, the Jewish magistracy, could not put a man to death at that time, they being wholly under the Roman power. But they were the instigators; and yet from time to time, to their very faces, do these poor illiterate men testify, that God had raised him from the dead whom ye have crucified, and him of whom ye were the betrayers and murderers. And this was the thing that stung them and cut them to the heart. You think to bring this man's blood upon us. But that they never spared to do. A most divine fortitude. That to the face of these powers, by whom such things were acted against our Lord, these men should, at the utmost peril of their own lives, so oppose themselves and their testimony, who but a little before did creep and sneak

to the denial of our Lord, as you know Peter himself did. Before he was crucified, he did not know the man; afterwards he tells the greatest of them to their faces, You have been his betrayers and murderers. And,

[9.] The terrible vengeance that hath followed hereupon, upon the nation of the Jews. A mighty subsidiary testimony. "Your house is left unto you desolate." Our Lord foretold them how it would be. "Not one stone should be left upon another, even as to their temple, (the thing wherein they so much gloried,) that should not be thrown down." He weeps over self-desolating Jerusalem. "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets," when he saw the calamity that was coming; but it came, and not a title failed of what was foretold, and according to what the prophets of old did foretell. "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations," Hosea ix. 17. That people, while they are yet in being in that scattered dispersed state, (wherein the world knows they are unto this day,) are a perpetual testimony, throughout all succeeding ages, of the truth of that Gospel and Christianity which they with so horrid malignity opposed themselves unto. And,

[10.] The marvellous success which the Gospel had since. That success it had immediately after the resurrection of our Lord: for he that descended, the same ascended, "that he might fill all things." Upon that ascent of his, what a mighty descent was there of the Spirit and power of God, that bore down all opposition! The Gospel was preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. And in this and that part of the world, you find there are solemn appeals. Do you not know what manner of entrance we had in this place and that place, and how men "turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son Jesus, who saveth from the wrath to come?" 1 Thess. i. latter end. How did the Gospel fly like lightning from one part and quarter of the world to another! How soon did it run through Judea and Samaria, and after that into remoter parts! A vast circuit in that age, and by the ministry of these very apostles. A Gospel that began to be spoken by the Lord himself, but was confirmed by them that heard him; "God bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost," Heb. ii. 4. That by which the apostle doth enforce the solemn caution, to take heed of letting slip the things that they had heard. For, saith he, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which began to be spoken?" And I may add,

[11.] The strange preservation of the Christian cause and interest through all successive times and ages. That when all the powers of earth and hell were combined to root and raze out Christianity, and all the vestiges and memorials of it, that could never be effected to this day. That as the spreading of the Gospel was by no human power, so no human power could prevail to extinguish it.

It was not in the way wherein the Mahomedan empire and religion did propagate themselves together, that this was propagated, to wit, by force and arms, and by the temptation of secular advantages, but by its own native and self-recommending light and lustre, and great design. And as it was propagated by no human means, so by no human means or power could it be extinguished, but hath grown upon the world in spite of the world, except the assigned foretold time of the apostacy, that dark and dismal interval wherein that work hath been so long at a stand, and out of which we are to expect its glorious revival.

All these things do concur to evince that that Revelation which hath been made to us concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, is from God: and so carries an indubitable truth in it to be relied upon. And it is upon that main and principal ground that our belief concerning him, that this Jesus is the Christ, must be built and rest, otherwise it is none of the faith which the Gospel claims to it. And it is all one to say the Gospel is a fable, and to believe it to be true and upon no ground, we cannot tell why or how.

* Preached March 25th, 1694.

SERMON XL.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

We have gone on to show, what the believing Jesus to be the Son of God is. And so much having been said concerning the grounds, both principal and subservient, of this belief, I shall superadd hereunto in the

Second place, what I reckon is not less necessary concerning the properties of it, that you may the more distinctly understand what sort of relief this must be that is to be given unto so great and important a truth, Jesus is the Christ. And I shall so state the properties of this belief as that they may visibly stand in that opposition wherein is requisite they should be set, to that common false belief which multitudes do satisfy and deceive themselves by at once to their destruction. You may, *eadem opera*, by the same cast of your eye discern the properties of that common false belief, and of that sincere faith concerning this truth, that the one may be avoided and declined, and the other may be aimed at with a restless endeavour and pursuit; so as that none may satisfy themselves till they can say, I find the belief of this great truth hath now its place in my soul, which will be finally saving to it.

There needs both much caution and much light to avoid the mistaken false faith of the multitude concerning this thing. I call it false, not doubting any of you apprehend that it is too possible a thing that there may be a very false faith of the greatest truth. One may believe the most important truth that can fall under human faith with a false faith. The thing is true that is believed in such cases, but it is not believed truly. And that is the sort of faith which I would have you know and avoid. And when you know what you are not to rest in, you will with the same light discern wherein you may safely rest. About a matter of such importance as this, it very much concerns both speaker and hearers at any time to speak and hear in agonies, and with hearts full of solicitude, lest we should mistake ourselves in a matter upon which eternity doth so immediately and entirely depend. Now,

1. The deceiving false faith of the multitude in this matter is but negative; but the sincere belief of this great truth, that Jesus is the Christ, is a most positive act of the soul. The common belief in this case is but a negative belief. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Yes, shall one tell you off hand, without deliberation or doubt, I do believe it. And what is the meaning of that? He believes it only thus, he doth not believe the contrary. He hath no formed opposite belief in his mind, and therefore thinks himself a very good believer. Whereas his believing is nothing else but a negation, an utter negation; to wit, he doth not disbelieve it. As if he should say, your question is to me upon the matter a new one, a new question, I never thought much of the business. I never asked myself whether I believed Jesus to be the Christ, yea or no. And for my part I have no contrary belief, and therefore hand over head he concludes himself a very good sound believer of this matter. But that faith which the Gospel claims, and which the necessities of souls do require and challenge, that they may have life by Christ, it is a most positive act of the soul, wherein the soul hath a real exercise. There is an exerted power of the soul put forth in this act, so that nothing can be more positive than that is. It is a substantial act of the soul, according as substance doth signify positive entity. And so is this faith called, it is the very substance of the thing believed, whatsoever that be, Heb. xi. 1. This other common faith hath no substance in it. Grasp it, feel it, it is but a shadow, hath nothing of substance. Do you believe Jesus to be the Christ? Yes, I do believe it; that is, there is as much substance in it as their saying so; as much as there is in the sound of a word, and no more. It is a mere negative thing, there is nothing positive in it.

2. The former of these is an ignorant, but the other a most intelligent act, proceeding upon knowledge. The de-

ceived multitude, when they pretend Jesus to be the Christ, they believe they know not what; they say they believe Jesus is the Christ, but they never consider what they mean by Christ. When they say this Jesus is the Christ, what the signification of that name is they never trouble themselves to understand, they were never at leisure to think of such matter. Indeed they have often heard the word, but they have not a meaning in their minds correspondent to that word (Christ) what it imports, what signification it carries with it; and so what is affirmed concerning this Jesus when he is affirmed to be the Christ, they neither have what we speak nor whereof we affirm about it. Jesus is considered by them as an ordinary person that lived so many years ago; but to say of him, that he is the Christ, you might as well have said nothing: they believe hand over head, but they believe they know not what.

But, now, when any one doth sincerely believe Jesus to be the Christ, he, believing it, understands what this Christ is, and what the name Christ signifies, the anointed one of God unto that great office of mediatorship between God and man; and was therefore every way qualified for the high and great work of that office, invested with that full authority which belongs to such an office. All power is given to him, both in heaven and in earth: one full of grace and truth: in whom all the divine excellencies were resplendent and most conspicuous, which were to have their exercise in the discharge of the work of this mighty office. So that the apprehensive mind of a sincere believer in this thing runs a vast compass; when it hears the name of Christ, it traverseth heaven and earth; it runs through all the creation; for as such a one Christ is considered "over all, God blessed for ever." One that descended; the same that afterwards ascended, that he might fill all things. And he could not be Christ else: one that must have a universal power over all minds and over all creatures: and one that can do whatsoever he will, both in heaven and earth, and all deep places; but whose kindness and benignity inclines him to the doing of all the good that any receptive and capable subject shall admit of; and to make many a one capable and receptive that is of itself quite otherwise. When such mighty texts as we find upon record concerning Christ, these many glorious things that are spoken of him come in view, O how is such a one enlightened by the lustre of any such text that speaks concerning Christ! Yes; that represents him to me, concerning whom my faith hath its present exercise, that it is for Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, that Child born for us, that Son given to us, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Jesus is the Christ; that is, he is the wonderful counsellor. When again we are told in Scripture that this is he who was in the beginning with God, and that he was God, and by whom the worlds were made, and that without whom nothing was made that was made; that came and descended, the eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father, and was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and his glory shone as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. Yes, this is my Christ! I believe that that Jesus who dwelt at Nazareth, born at Bethlehem, was such a Christ. He by whom all things were made, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, things in heaven and earth; this is my Christ. He that is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the Lord God Almighty. He that was dead and is alive again and lives for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and death. This is my Christ. The name Christ fills such a man's soul with light and glory, even in that very instant when he believes this Jesus to be the Christ; so as that admitting him into the mind under this notion, it insensibly admits a deity in his all-comprehending fulness.

He doth not believe a trivial thing concerning this Jesus, when he believes him to be the Christ, but believes him to be all in all. This is my all, and the universal all unto whosoever they are that shall come to partake felicity by him at length. This is nothing like the mock faith of the multitude, that think themselves well if off-hand they answer you the question when you ask, Is Jesus the Christ. Yes—But they neither know nor consider what Christ means, nor what they attribute to this Jesus, in calling him the Christ. Again,

3. That former belief concerning him, it is a dubious, hovering, and fluctuating thing. The sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ, is peremptory, and full of a concomitant certainty, and thorough persuasion of mind concerning him that so indeed he is. As to the former, what do you think? "Was that Jesus the Christ, or are we to look for another?" Here the mind hangs in a dubious suspense, and they rather say, No sure, we are not to look for another, because he came so long ago, and there hath no other appeared since. But concerning the sincere believer, this is the character under which we may conceive of him, John vi. 68. "We believe and are sure that thou art Christ the Son of the living God." Many minds in those days hung in doubt; and less of doubting may appear among us, because we seldom hear the question asked. With many, the mind hangs on a suspense and indifferency. Is this the Christ, or is another to be he? Why, this is as good as another; this may do as well as another; and for many years we have heard no talk of another, nor do we hear that for many an age by-past. But, saith the sincere believer, we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. A sincere belief in this matter determines the mind, so that there it pitcheth. As it is when the balance is cast, and gives over quivering, here we are at a point. "Whom say ye that I am?" saith our Lord to them, Matt. xvi. 16. And Peter answered for the rest, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." See how our Lord owns and accepts his faith, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Thus it is when a divine revelation shines into the heart. I am afraid that that belief is too great a rarity in our age, concerning which it may be truly said, it is not by the product of flesh and blood. O! how few are the souls that may avow it before the Lord, I have that belief in me, of Jesus being the Christ, that comes not from flesh and blood. It is not flesh and blood that hath prompted to this, but a divine light and mighty power from above upon my soul. And it is such a faith that makes a blessed man. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona." "O! blessed man, that such a faith as this hath entered thy soul, that such a beam of heavenly and divine light hath been struck down into it." It is a great thing if, laying our hands upon our hearts, we can apply this pronounced blessedness to ourselves, as much as if it had been said to us by name. O! blessed, thou such a one, thou John, Thomas, flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but the eternal Father, he hath revealed his own Son, he hath taught thee to own him for his Christ, and his own Son. We believe and are sure; such a belief as carries a certainty with it, not that doth altogether exclude, at some certain intervals, a *formido oppositi*. There may be that which morality and policy is wont to style a *plena voluntas*, where there is a determination strong enough to carry a man to consequent acts. And so there may be a *plenum judicium*, not that totally excludes every degree of the contrary, but that prevails over every such degree; and so is determinative, carries the course and current of a man's practical power with it, consequently and agreeably thereunto. So we are to conceive concerning this certainty, that I am not in that dubious suspense, whether this Jesus be the Christ as thereby to surcease and desist from that which ought to be consequent thereupon, to wit, venturing my soul upon him, devoting myself to him, paying obedience to his laws, laying the stress and weight of all my concernments upon his faithfulness, love, and fulness. It is certainty in such a sense, that prevails so far as to govern my consequent resolutions and actions. And,

4. The false deceiving faith of the multitude in this matter is cold and dead, unoperative and without efficacy; let their hearts remain as stones or clods of clay under it, unaffected and unmoved. But this belief, when it is sincere, is vivid, lively, affectionate, and most efficacious; productive of whatsoever is suitable and correspondent hereunto. A vast difference there is in this respect also! I am sure the difference cannot be greater than the importance is. But it is a very great difference that appears here between belief and belief. A belief that never moves my soul, and is as if it had never touched it. According as some fantastically speak (your enthusiastical writers

among the papists, some of them) concerning theoretical knowledge, wherein they place the sum of all religion, that it doth *tangere intangibiliter*, it touches the mind as if it never touched it; indeed this is the deceiving belief of the multitude, they have a belief that so toucheth their minds that it cannot be perceived it ever touched it, it never touched their minds at all, but leaves them unimpressed; there is no signature left behind, no mark, no character, by which it can be said such a faith was ever there. That is, notwithstanding all the belief they pretend to concerning this Jesus, and concerning the great things of the Christian religion, (whereof this is the sum,) their hearts are as dead, as cold, as terrene, as unaffected, as if they had never heard of any such thing, void of all kind of impression. Dost thou believe Jesus to be the Christ, and retain a hard heart, a dead heart, a stupid heart, touched with nothing, having no sense, no feeling of any thing that this great truth carries so plain a signification of in it? What doth this Jesus being the Christ signify? It plainly signifies the lost, undone state of souls, the miserable condition of men in this world, that there needed such a Jesus, such a Christ to descend and come down from heaven with such fulness and divine power. When a man can believe Jesus to be the Christ, (as he said he doth,) but it never moves his soul one way or other; his faith makes no more impression upon him than if he had never believed or heard of such a thing, or than if he had believed the quite contrary. Be no more affected with Christ by believing him to be the Christ, than if he had believed him to be a deceiver and an impostor; his heart as little touched or moved with any suitable, correspondent impression of such a belief of his being the Christ, as if he had never heard of any such thing, or had believed concerning him the quite contrary. Will we call this believing Jesus to be the Christ with a Gospel faith?

On the other hand, the sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ; it worketh through and through a man's soul—works down into every power and faculty. It is a faith that hath spirit in it, that penetrates and spreads itself into all the regions of a man's soul; as we read of a spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13. "We having the same spirit of faith," (speaking of what had been said by David many an age before,) what doth that signify when he quotes him professing faith in reference to such a thing so long ago: and the apostle now resumes the matter, and saith, "We have the same spirit of faith." It signifies that faith, wheresoever it hath been sincere and true, even in the most distant times and ages, that may be supposed it is a spirit of faith, or it is a faith full of spirit. Sincere faith is a spiritual thing, a thing that carries life, and spirit, and power with it, wherever it is. Pray let us not deceive ourselves about this. They are mighty affections, which the belief of such a thing as this must excite and raise in those souls in whom it truly is; especially those two most correspondent unto the person concerning whom we have this belief, that he is the Christ; to wit, reverence and love, and especially that love which rises unto delight and high complacency, the joy taken in him of whom we have this apprehension or this belief.

(1.) Reverence. This belief concerning Jesus, that he is the Christ, it fills the sincere believer with the profoundest reverence of him; so that he falls before him, saying, "My Lord and my God," John xx. 28. He is acknowledged in his glorious greatness when any do sincerely believe this concerning him; he is beheld as on the throne; he is considered as one that having purged our sins is ascended and sitten down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is a great thing to have this belief concerning him, answerably forming a man's spirit into adoring postures. He is now great in our eyes; a glorious one; one that we think it profane ever to look towards but with veneration. We dare not lift an eye towards him but with an adoring soul. O! my great, glorious, and exalted Lord. This is he whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Him whom he hath sealed, to whom he hath given power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as God hath given him. With such a reverence must this belief be accompanied concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ. And then,

(2.) With complacency; that love that hath heightened itself into a complacential joy thereupon. Do I believe this Jesus to be the Christ? O! how can a pleasant joy be thereupon but spread in my soul! As we find it was when this belief first began to obtain concerning him, John i. 35. We read, that the two disciples of John having received the account, and being satisfied concerning this blessed one, having had John's testimony, that he bare record that he upon whom ye shall see "the Spirit of God descending like a dove is the Son of God;" he having seen this satisfactory sight, and acquainting the other two of his disciples, they run away with it. Oh we have found the Messiah, who by interpretation is the Christ; so say they in transport. What a joy were these good men in, and how did it diffuse and spread among others! They run and tell others, Oh we have found Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ. It flies like lightning from one to another, every one being the ready instrument to convey the pleasant notice which they had got concerning this great thing. The joyful Εὕρηκα runs from mouth to mouth, and from ear to ear, and from heart to heart. Εὕρηκα, Εὕρηκα, saith one to another, we have found, we have found the Messiah, the Christ. Have we indeed found him? Is it found among us that this Jesus is the Christ? O, what multitudes of transported souls would there be among us! For it is no excuse that this is no novelty among us: for it is a thing that never ought to grow old. As he is the way of returning sinners to God, that is always new and always living. It is a reproach to us to say that the notion is grown stale among us, of Jesus being the Christ. Instead of being grown old, it is grown to nothing, dwindled away to nothing. It looks but like a notion without any thing at the bottom, that we seem to account hath nothing of reality in it; from our apprehensiveness of the state of the case, and what the design of Heaven was in constituting such a one in that high and sacred office that is notified by the name Christ, it is thus become such a notion. But, what? are not the necessities free and urgent upon us every day for which we did need a Christ? Nay, can we go to God without him? And can we live comfortably in this world without God? Nay, can we draw a breath without him? Are not all things delivered up into his hand? And is not he constituted Lord of all? By the same thing by which we would pretend the commonness of this belief, and the ancientness of it, as a reason why it affects no more, we do (as it were) proclaim the nullity of it, that it doth not only signify little with us, but it signifies nothing; it is an unoperative thing; and to be a dead thing in this kind is to be nothing: as a dead man or the carcass of a man is equivalent to no man, and so is that faith (in the apostle James's phrase) which is unoperative and works not, dead also. This faith that doth not affect the heart is but as a carcass without a spirit, which is for no valuable purpose and use to be reckoned otherwise of than a mere unformed piece of clay. An unformed piece of clay signifies as much for any valuable purpose as that which is formed into the shape of a human body where there is no spirit, and when it is but a breathless thing.

This of the operativeness and efficacy of this belief in contradistinction to the dead cold faith of the multitude in this matter, leads to what is yet further and more deeply to be considered concerning it; and that is, the residence which this faith hath in the will: for, being so efficacious a thing, it works itself into a government, a regency, a ruling power, into that which is the imperial faculty of the soul; to wit, the will, there it comes to have a throne erected, or rather there it doth enthrone Christ, so as that he comes to be exalted in a subject-will, and is actually entertained there according to that discovery the Gospel makes of him. And so next to this persuasion of the mind, which is to be distinguished from that which carries with multitudes the same deceiving, insignificant name—I say, besides and next to that persuasion or assent of the mind, there is a compliance of the will that belongs to the essence of this faith. We believe this Jesus to be the Christ, so as to will him accordingly; or by our will to entertain him in a correspondent admission unto the design of the revelation. We acknowledge him, we own him suitably according to the import of this name Christ.

SERMON XLI.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I SHALL now go on to clear the efficacy of this faith, which, if it be right and such as it ought to be, will diffuse a mighty and efficacious influence through the whole soul. It will be as a great vital spring in the heart, that sets all the wheels in motion, and acteth every faculty and power. But its next and more immediate operation must be upon the will. So doth this belief, (as it were) transire, pass over from the mind into the heart, into the very centre, and therein especially and most principally the will, which is the chief thing that goes under the name of the heart in Scripture phrase. Its great effect is, that the will is proportionably framed, inclined, bowed, made to comply, according to this discovery and revelation that is made of so great and glorious an object; one in whom the soul hath so near and great a concern—"The Christ of God," as he is called. This is the representation that is made in the mind, this Jesus is the Christ. "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answers, (Luke ix. 20.) "Thou art the Christ of God." Such a truth as this cannot be received aright into the soul, but it must turn the whole soul, and especially the governing faculty, the will, so as that it shall be inclined and bowed to him accordingly. For it is never to be thought that there should such a revelation be made, not only in the Gospel, but in the mind, concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, but it is in order to some further purpose. He is not so revealed to be gazed upon, to be looked upon, but that the soul should be acted towards him and be carried towards him, according to that revelation and belief. Therefore the great effect that is wrought by such an efficacious belief, is, the will's consent that he shall be such to me, as this name (Christ) doth import; I consent to it, that he shall be Christ to my soul, and that consent takes in two things, reception and resignation. These two things I shall distinctly open to you, reception of him, and resignation of ourselves to him.

But consider we first what is more general here. This consenting act of the will, how that is the consummation of faith; this is faith perfected. The bare assent or belief, that this is he, is inchoate faith, faith begun, faith tending to its end and perfection; but this is faith in its end. The other is faith moving towards Christ, this is faith resting in Christ. It is the acquiescence of faith by which he comes to have an inbeing in the soul, and the soul hath a possession of him. He dwells in the heart by faith. It is by faith, thus considered, that he comes to dwell even in the very heart, in the centre, as the expression is, Eph. iii. 17. The soul hath possession of him, and is said to have him; "He that hath the Son, hath life," as in the 12th verse of this chapter. This is the unitive act of faith, by which the soul closeth and falls in with him, as in the 20th verse of this chapter. He hath given us an understanding (there's faith in the mind, a right belief or apprehension of him) to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ, who is the true God and eternal life.

There are considerable the same gradations in faith, as it relates to Christ, as there are commonly observed to be in faith as it relates to God, that is, *Credere Deum*, *credere Deo*, and *credere in Deum*. To believe that there is a God; to believe God speaking to us in his word, revealing this or that to us; and to believe in God or into God: to wit, to unite with him as our God, take him for our God. The same gradation is in faith as to Christ: you "believe in God, believe also in me." There is a *credere Christum*, *credere Christo*, and *credere in Christum*. To believe, first, that there is a Christ, in opposition to the pagan world, that never thought of any such thing. Then to believe him to be revealing himself to be he, "I am *he*," (if ye believe not that I am he,) in opposition to the Jews, who indeed believed that there should be a Christ, that there must be a Messiah; but who did not believe that this was he. And then, again, to believe in Christ, or to believe into Christ, (as the prepositions used signify,) to believe into a union with him, in opposition to the formalists, or *pseudo* Christians, the mere nominal Christians, that can believe (or say they do) against pagans, that there is or must be a Christ; or against the Jews, that this is he, but never believe into him for all that, so as to close with him, as my Christ; unite with him, admit him into my heart and soul, so as that he comes to have his throne, not only his dwelling, but his seat of government in my very will; as the will is the governing faculty in the soul, Christ is the governor, the ruler there in that seat of government. So (God knows) he is believed in but by few even of them that bear his name, and call themselves Christians. We are as much concerned to have a faith concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, in opposition to formalists and nominal Christians, as we are to have a faith in this matter, in opposition to pagans and Jews: for it is all one how we perish, whether we perish under the name of pagans, or Jews, or false Christians, that never had the power or spirit of faith in Christ in them.

And so much of this consent of faith in general. But more particularly, it carries (as I said) these two things in it, reception and resignation: reception of him, and resignation of ourselves to him. There is in that faith, that will avail us unto salvation, taking and giving at the same time, complicated with one another. When we give we take, when we take we give. When we take him, we at the same time consent that we will be his, and that he shall be ours. This constitutes the covenant between him and us. And considering that he is to be covenanted with but as a Mediator, as Mediator of the Gospel, and that through him we finally and ultimately covenant with God, according to that, "ye believe in God, believe also in me:" you must believe me in your way to God. Why it is this that doth make up the entire covenant between God and us in Christ. We accept him, and God in him; we give ourselves to him, and to God through him. This is consummate faith, as you will see more, when we have (as we intend) opened further to you what it comprehends.

And that we may more clearly and distinctly apprehend that, there are several things yet more particularly to be spoken to; to wit, to let you know that this same faith concerning Jesus as the Christ, must carry with it,

1. Suitable apprehensions concerning ourselves and concerning him.
2. It includes in it some correspondent actings yet further to be considered.
3. It must be attended with some suitable qualifying adjuncts. And,
4. It must be attended with some concomitant dispositions and affections that are proper hereunto.

1. It must have with it suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and him: for you see here is the most immediate transactions in this matter imaginable between us and him, when we are to accept him, and resign ourselves to him. Here must be then necessarily suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and of him.

(1.) Of ourselves. When one goes upon such a transaction as this with Jesus as the Christ, I must consider with myself what I am, and what my state is. And, what am I, upon my most serious and inquiring thoughts? Why,

[1.] I find myself a creature under obligation to be governed by him that made me; and who shall be further obliged hereunto, if he that made all will further be favourable to me.

[2.] I must understand myself to be a miserable creature. It is as such I must have to do with this Jesus as the Christ. An undone creature, a lost creature. I do but touch upon these things.

[3.] I must consider myself an offending creature, as one that am miserable by my having broken laws and rules, and who that way have brought myself under guilt. A miserable creature, without the apprehension of being a guilty creature, is an insolent and proud creature. I am miserable, but I am faultless. If any should bear that sense with them, they can have nothing to do with Christ, he is nothing to them. And,

* Preached April 18th, 1694.

[4.] I must apprehend myself to be a depraved creature, habitually depraved; destitute of any good principles, either of duty towards God, or that have any tendency to felicity for myself. And I am under the possession and power of the most pernicious, radical principles of all iniquity and injuriousness towards God, and misery to myself. So I must apprehend the state of my case when I apply myself, and when my soul moves towards this Jesus as the Christ. And,

(2.) I must have suitable apprehensions of him too; here I am to consent to accept of him for mine, to resign myself to him as his. Both these, reception and resignation, do require that I should have suitable apprehensions of him; that is,

[1.] I must consider his original power over me, as he is the beginning of the creation of God; "as by him all things were made, visible and invisible," Col. i. 15, 16. As by whom God made the worlds, Heb. i. 2. As originally invested with a sovereign, governing power, which, because it was original and natural to him, can never be lost, more than the Godhead. He is the Lord my maker, whom I am to receive, and unto whom I am to resign. And,

[2.] I must consider him as a constituted Ruler. So he is as Mediator. Consider him abstractedly, as he was the eternal Son of God, so he hath a natural power of government over all. But as he is Mediator, God-man, he is a Governor too by constitution. All power is given him both in heaven and earth. The Father hath given all things into his hand, John xiii. 3. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as God hath given him," John xvii. 2. So I must apprehend and conceive of him.

[3.] I must conceive of him as a Saviour; and thereupon as a Redeemer, as a Reconciler, that was to save, by redeeming and reconciling perishing, lost, guilty creatures, to an offended God. This is the apprehension one must have in consenting to him. And the soul that hath believed aright that this Jesus is the Christ, it will be full of this sense in this transaction: Aye, this is just such a one as I need; for I find myself miserable, I find myself lost, I find myself undone, by my having offended, and involved myself in guilt, against my sovereign, rightful Lord. There can never be any reception of him, or resignation to him, without this. And,

[4.] He must be understood and apprehended as a vital head, replenished with spirit and holy influence; so as that all that shall come into holy union with him, shall thereby derive spirit, and life, and grace, and holy influence from him: the thing which the exigency of the case so much calls for, as we are creatures so miserably depraved, and dead in trespasses and sins, disinclined to the doing and enjoying good in point of felicity. Such a one I need; and so I must consider Christ as one given to be "the head of all things to the church," Ephes. i. 22. He hath a universal political headship over all. But a vital headship over the church, (to wit, that is truly such,) that is, his body, his living body. And such a one must the soul, that is treating and transacting with him, apprehend him to be even in this closure, this unitive closure; I am a most wretched, deformed, depraved creature; I believe this Jesus to be the Christ, I believe it belongs to the office of this same Christ to be the fountain and spring of life and renovating grace to poor souls that shall come into union with him: and I come unto him as such, I receive him as such, and resign myself to him as such. Every one that is in Christ is a new creature. I need to be new made throughout, new created; I am lost and undone for ever if I be not so; I come to him, unto this union with him, to be made anew throughout, according to that, 2 Cor. v. 17. and that, Ephes. ii. 10. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." He is a new plastes; we had a miserable protoplast; we have another former now, a reformer. Christ is to be formed in us, his own image is to be formed in our hearts. He himself can only form his image, and draw it upon us: and that is our business with him. And blessedness itself can never make us blessed, if we be not made new, if we be not made over again, another sort of creatures than we were before. Thus there must be in this belief (as it comprehends our reception of him and resignation to him) suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and of him in this transaction, otherwise all will turn to nothing. And again,

2. There must be suitable included acts, even in those of receiving him and resigning ourselves. First, there must be the act of trust: and, secondly, the act of subjection: otherwise we do not receive him, and resign ourselves to him, suitably to the apprehensions that are given to us of that object. When we do receive him, how do we receive him? We receive him as Christ Jesus the Lord, Col. ii. 6. You receive Christ, (that is, the name of his office, that we are to believe Jesus to be invested with,) the anointed one of God. But what is he anointed to, or what is he anointed for? To be to us both Jesus and the Lord. Jesus is a Saviour, Lord is an owner and ruler. It cannot be, then, but that our receiving him, and our resigning ourselves to him, must comprehend in them,

(1.) Trust, an absolute trust. When we receive him, we receive him as one in whom we trust; and when we resign ourselves to him, we resign ourselves as committing ourselves, in trusting ourselves. We receive him under the pleasant notion of a Saviour, and so we resign ourselves to him, to be saved by him, confiding in his saving mercy, encouraged by his word," "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." I will cast myself upon him, without any suspicion that he will ever cast me out; he will ever be as good as his word. Who ever did venture upon him, and perish? I will throw myself into those safe arms. This is included both in receiving and resigning; for I receive him as a Saviour, as Christ Jesus; and I resign myself to him, I commit, I intrust, I can credit myself to him accordingly as such. And then,

(2.) As both these together do carry in them trust, so they carry in them subjection; there is not only committing ourselves, but there is also submitting ourselves. We commit, and submit, and subject ourselves to him at the same time; for he is received as Christ Jesus the Lord, and according as the Gospel represents him. "For all the house of Israel know, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ," Acts ii. 36. This must go for a known thing all Israel over, and all the world over, wherever he comes to be revealed; "That God hath made him both Lord and Christ. And him hath he exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, (Acts v. 31.) to give repentance and remission of sins." Repentance, wherein we humble ourselves before him as a Prince, prostrate ourselves, throw ourselves down at the footstool of his throne; and remission of sins, which he gives as a Saviour. Now are all sins forgiven to you, go away and be whole, you are accepted, you are pardoned. Your scores are taken off; all things set right between him and you. God hath exalted him to be a prince, and so he humbles and gives repentance; and as a Saviour he forgives you. These are the acts correspondent to this two-fold notion. Not that the one is any cause of the other, or signifies any thing for the obtaining of them. But these are conjunct things by divine constitution and the exigency of the case itself. As a Prince, he humbles them to repentance: and as a Saviour, he forgives them, wipes off all scores, takes off their guilt, and sets all things right between God and them. We here must then be at once both trusting in him as a Saviour, and subjecting ourselves to him as a Prince; devoting and dedicating ourselves, so as determining henceforth not to live to ourselves; no, but to him that died for us, and rose again. This is the judgment of a soul brought under the constraint of the love of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. So that hereupon this becomes the sense of the soul, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Phil. i. 20. While I live, I have no business to do but for Christ; my gain comes to me when I die—then I gain him. In the mean time, the business of my life is Christ, to live up Christ, live up his interest, serve him as a devoted one. My life is sacred to Christ, a hallowed and devoted thing. This is receiving and reigning, as comprehending acts suitable to the state of the case to what he is, and what we are. We are not to think of receiving and resigning blindly, and in the dark, and as those that know not for what; but upon such accounts, and with such actions of heart and soul as these, committing and submitting ourselves most absolutely to him. And,

3. Here must be some qualifying adjuncts of these acts of receiving and resigning, especially these two, totality

and vitality. It may be, you will remember them the better for the sound's sake. But they are expressions that speak the importance of the thing more plainly than any other can that occurs to my thoughts.

(1.) There must be totality with these acts of the one part and the other, to wit, with reference to the object, and with reference to the subject. Consider the act of reception with reference to the object, we are to receive a whole Christ; consider the act of resignation with respect to the subject, and we are to resign our whole selves. Reception must be with totality, a reception of a whole Christ; resignation must be with totality, a resignation of our whole selves. To take Christ but by halves, will not do the business; to resign ourselves but by halves, will not do the business neither. To take Christ only to serve a turn, that he may save me from wrath, without renewing my nature, and bringing me into a union and communion with himself and with God through him; this will not do; neither will it do for me to resign myself, and not my whole self,—my whole soul. Will it content any one to be saved by halves, to be half saved, and half lost, if this were possible? But then,

(2.) There must be vitality as to both these, as well as totality. There must be vital reception, and vital resignation; life must accompany these acts. "He that hath the Son hath life," as it is afterwards, ver. 12. of this chapter. I must so take him and receive him, as that, by a vital act of my will, I become united with him as with a living thing; for I find new life hath entered into my soul. I must so resign myself to him that life may go into that act of resignation. "Yield yourselves unto the Lord as those that are alive unto God. And reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 11, 13. There must be life springing in my soul towards God and through Jesus Christ. The cold, dead indifferency and aversion towards God is gone, and with the spirit of faith a spirit of life enters. And so when I come to give myself up, it is not as a dead thing. "Offer up yourselves living sacrifices, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ," Rom. xii. 1. But then,

4. There must be suitable concomitant affections, especially these two, reverence and joy.

(1.) Reverence. Whom do I receive? and to whom do I resign? The great and glorious Lord of all. Think what this name (Christ) doth import. The Christ of God, as you heard. He to whom all power is given in heaven and earth. When I receive him, how great a one is now to enter my soul! This sense is now to possess it, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, for the King of glory is entering in." He is to come and take up his dwelling in my soul by faith, as in the 24th Psalm, latter end. It must be with a prostrate soul that I am to receive him; let the everlasting doors fly open: here is a mighty one to come, him, the Lord of glory. Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof; I know if thou comest thou bringest life with thee, and salvation with thee to my soul. But O in how humble and reverential a posture must the soul be in this thing! And,

(2.) Joy. He is to be received and resigned unto with highest complacency; with a most complacential reception and resignation. The soul is glad things are brought to that pass between God and him. Oh, blessed be God for this day, that he hath revealed his Christ, and hath revealed him in me; and that I have found him, and in him found according to his own word, "They that find me find life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." O! what a blessed day is this! How hath God signalized this day with my soul, in bringing about this union and commerce between this Christ and me!

This is believing Jesus to be the Christ. If you believe it to purpose, this is it. And pray think with yourselves; can it be any thing less than this? That faith that is short of this is both a nullity and an affront. A nullity, a vanity as to you, and an affront as to God and Christ.

To you a nullity, a vanity, a nothing: for can that faith, that belief, signify any thing, that doth not reach its end? I pray what is the end, think you, of this revelation of Christ, that there should be such a record extant concerning this Jesus that he is the Christ? Why should it be revealed? Why should it be declared? why am I required to believe it? to be persuaded in my heart of the truth hereof? Can it be for any end, but that my soul may be brought into a vital, unitive closure with him hereupon? If it doth not effect this, it effects nothing. It is from hence my Christianity commenceth. It is but now that I become a Christian, any thing besides a name. When my soul passeth into this union with him by consent, by reception, by resignation, now I become a Christian, now I am in Christ, now the spirit of faith hath exerted its power in my soul, without which there is no believing. "We having the same spirit of faith, believe," 2 Cor. iv. 13. There can be no faith to purpose without a spirit of faith. Here doth the spirit of faith exert itself, and so it is but now that I do begin to be a Christian; for he that hath not the spirit of Christ is none of his, he is no Christian; let him be called what he will, let men call him what they please, he is none of Christ's. And what, will my Christianity without a Christ save me, or do me any good? To have a Christless Christianity, what shall I be the better for that?

And it is indeed not only a nullity as to myself; but it is an affront and provocation to God and Christ, if in believing and assenting to this truth, that Jesus is the Christ, my soul do not hereupon unite and close with him; for it is a refusing him in the face of light. It is a refusing him, when I know and profess to know who he is. I profess this Jesus to be the Christ, and yet my soul stands out against him. For I must be either a consenter or refuser. To refuse him when I know who he is, when I profess to believe who he is, this is higher wickedness than the Jews were guilty of when they crucified him; for if they had known him to be the Lord of glory, they would not have crucified him. But I know this Jesus is the Christ, yet I will him not. "You will not come to me, that you may have life." Here is a knowing and denying at once. "He that denieth the Son, hath not the Father," 1 John ii. 23. But he that doth acknowledge that this Jesus is the Christ, hath the Father and the Son both together. If it be vitally acknowledged, so as that the soul pass hereby into union with both, then he hath both.

I hope we speak and hear of these things with a design to be and do accordingly, otherwise here is time the most unhappily thrown away that could have been. We had been better treating of any trivial subject, if such a thing as this should have been spoken or been attended to slightly, and with neglect. All lies upon this, depends upon this: all for our present comfort in this life here in this world, and our future happy blessed life in the other world.

SERMON XLII.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

And thus, what this faith, concerning Jesus's being the Son of God, or the Christ, doth in itself import, hath been largely shown. And now,

II. What is said of such as do believe this with this faith, we are to open to you, to wit, what this being "born of God" imports. And concerning it, I shall first note to you two things in general; and then come to give you a more distinct and particular account of it afterwards. In general,

1. That this must needs be a very great difference, which such a work as this makes between men and men, this being "born of God." The difference cannot but to every one's understanding appear very great, between one that is born of God, and one that is not born of God: especially too, when you consider, that every one that is not born of God, is of the seed and offspring of the worst father that ever was. For there are but two great fathers whose posterity divide all mankind; they that have not

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God for their Father, as being born of him, our Lord tells them, "You are of your father the devil, and his works ye will do," John viii. 44. "And by this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil," 1 John iii. 10. It hath enough in it to amaze a man's soul, to have this matter represented as a thing doubted of, and to be inquired about, To which of these fathers do I relate? If the one of them be not my father, the other is. This must be understood (as any ordinary understanding will easily apprehend) not concerning a person's naturals but his morals. When a man is said to be a child of the devil, it is not as if there were any thing of positive natural being wrought in him by the devil, but only a moral depravation. And so when any are the children of God, it is not that any new natural faculty is created, but the faculties that were created at first, and that are depraved, and upon which the image of the devil is impressed, are sanctified; defaced, and purged of that impurity, and stamped with an impression from the Spirit of holiness, which is the regenerating Spirit.

That is one consideration, and a mighty one it is; and very obvious, one would think, to every one's thoughts, that this must make a very vast difference between men to be born of God, and not to be born of him, and to be either of his, or of the devil's seed. And,

2. This is to be generally noted too, that this difference is universal upon all believers. The greatness of it, and universality of it, are the two things that I would have previously noted. And this latter you have expressly in the text, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Every one, without exception. So that there is no room left for such an imagination to any one, Is it not possible that some or other may pass for believers, without having this work pass upon them, so vastly differencing men from one another, as this being born of God is? A great thing indeed! What? may none pass for a believer but such as are born of God? May not in the census some or other escape without that mark upon them? No, saith the apostle, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Let him call himself whatsoever he will, he is real infidel; let him be never so much a nominal believer, if he be not born of God, his believing of this, that Jesus is the Christ, is as nothing; it is no believing. As in another case, circumcision goes for no circumcision, if it be not of the heart and spirit, and not only of the letter. As circumcision will go for no circumcision (where there is the very thing figured and represented) if it be the figure and no more, so doth such a pretended faith go for no faith, (let men say never so long we believe Jesus is the Christ,) if they be not born of God, they will never pass in the divine estimate for believers.

And now these two generals being noted, we must come to give you a more distinct and particular account what this being "born of God" doth import. And that we shall do in this two-fold gradation: 1st, Speaking to it as it is a birth; and 2dly, As it is a being born of God, as it is a divine birth. As it is a being born; and as it is a being born of God. The latter whereof, as you may easily apprehend, doth greatly sublimate the former, and raise it higher, and should raise our thoughts and apprehensions proportionably higher about it.

(1.) As this work done upon the soul is called a birth, let us consider it so. And that is a more general consideration, and a lower one; and as a fountain and substratum to what is afterwards to be added under the other more specifying notion. Why, as it is said to be a birth, it signifies such things as these,

[1.] A real new product in the soul, that there is somewhat really produced anew in it. This must be signified by being born. Being born is not a fiction, is not a fancy; it is not an imaginary thing. Being born signifies a real new production, that there is really somewhat new brought forth into being, that before was not; and so as to make the subject so far another thing from what before it was; or works such an imitation, as that the person in whom this work is wrought, is not what before he was. It brings the matter to this, that he may truly say, *Ego non sum ego*, I am not the same (I) that I was. As the apostle saith of himself, 1 Tim. i. 11. "I was a blasphemer, I was a persecutor, I was injurious, but I obtained mercy." And that mercy which he had obtained, had made him quite another man. And this he doth not speak of himself as a single person separately considered, but he speaks of himself as a pattern to all that should thereafter believe; that he was taken herein as set for a pattern (as the expression is in the original) what mighty changes the power and spirit of grace could work in the souls of men, so as to make them so much other men from themselves. Is it very true indeed, that for those that hitherto continue in their natural and unregenerate state, they are not all sinners alike, they are not all sinners in the same kind. Every such sinner is not a persecutor, is not a blasphemer. But every such sinner is a carnal wretch, a stranger to God, alienated from him, unacquainted with him; one that hath no love to him, no fear of him, no delight in him, no desire to please him, no design to serve him. "No, as to what change is made in me, (saith the apostle,) I am not here to speak of myself as a single person, but I am to speak of myself as a pattern, what the Almighty Spirit of divine grace can effect upon the soul of a man, to make him quite another sort of thing from what he was." There is somewhat common to all unregenerate persons, and to all regenerate persons, wherein such a pattern may very well reach and suit every one's case. Every one that is unregenerate, is a stranger to God, unacquainted with him; one that lives as without him in the world; that hath no design to know him, or love him, or please him, or serve or glorify him. Every one that is regenerate, his dispositions are changed in all these respects. Now what is common herein, must the apostle be understood to mean himself to be, a pattern to subsequent believers; those that should come hereafter to believe. Wherever that believing is, there is this change; there is that imitation in the subject, as will speak this person to be new born. There is a new production in him, by which he is quite another sort of man from what he was. "Every one that is in Christ (as every one comes to be in him by believing) is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. It is the great design of our Lord Jesus Christ (as he is the restorer and repairer of the ruins of a lapsed world, and of a corrupt nature in man,) to make all things new, so far as his design takes place and succeeds. "Behold I make all things new," Rev. xxi. 5. That is my business upon which I am intent; so that there is a real new production every where, where there is faith in Christ wrought, in every such person, which makes him truly differ (and not in imagination only) from what he was, and from what others are. And again,

[2.] As this is a real production to be thus born, new born; so it is a spiritual production, in contradistinction to such productions as lie within the sphere of nature. It is an extra-natural production. For, as I told you before, this makes men differ from what they were, not in mere naturals, but morals; and so it is an extra-natural production. It doth not lie in the sphere of nature, but lies in the sphere of grace. You may collect it to be an extra-natural production by two things: 1st, The principal seat of it; and 2dly, The great agent that is employed herein. The prime subject of it is the mind and spirit. The great agent employed herein is our Lord Jesus Christ, as it appears to be the immediate result of believing this Jesus to be the Christ: then he is born of God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

First, Consider the former of these; it is a work, the primary subject whereof is the mind. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Here is a transformation to be wrought, by which men cease to be conformed to the world, to be like the world as they were. But where is the seat of this transformation? "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans xii. 2. and so Ephesians iv. 22, 23. "We have not so learned Christ: if ye have heard of him, as the truth is in Jesus," that is, "to put off the old man which is corrupt by deceivable lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind." If you have heard and learned Christ, or the truth as it is in Jesus, this is the effect of it, that you "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." It is an expression that hath somewhat more of emphasis in it, than that last mentioned expression. Transformed by the renewing of the mind, doth represent the subject not merely, not only as a knowing thing, but as an active thing; as the

very action of spirit speaks activity or active vigour. And so it is not a mere contemplative knowing which belongs to the mind alone, abstractly considered; but there being spirit in that mind, that turns all that knowledge into vital principles, suitable for present actions and operations. And this is the very centre of that subject, or seat of this renovation, or transforming change. You must be renewed in this faculty, not only as it is cognitive, but as it is active; as there is a spirit suiting it for vigorous acting centring in it. Here is the seat of this renovation. This plainly speaks this to be an extra-natural production, as well as it speaks it to be a real one, as before was said.

Secondly, If we consider Christ as the ministering agent here, and as he was the prime minister of the Gospel by which this work is effected and done upon souls. It did not belong to him in this capacity, as he was Christ, merely to bring forth a new natural production into the old world. It is true that belongs to him too, but under another notion, as he was the Creator of all things, things visible and invisible, things in heaven and things on earth; all were created by him and for him, to wit, if you consider him in his abstract Deity. But the name Christ is the appropriated name of his office, as he is the Mediator. Every one that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. Believing him to be Christ, that is, to be the restorer of a lapsed, perishing world, not the creator of it, as he was at the first, which belongs to him in that distinct natural capacity; but look upon him as a constituted Mediator, a restorer and repairer of fallen, ruined, perishing creatures; look upon him so as the name Christ signifies him to be, and so he is the agent in this great work. "He that believeth him to be the Christ, is born of God." "And he that is in Christ, is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. and again, Ephes. ii. 10. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Whatsoever lay within the confines and limits of nature, would do us no good, that is all but self. We are not saved by ourselves, but we are saved by grace, and not by nature, or any thing natural, as you have it in that context. How is that? Why, we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Now the agency of Christ Jesus as he is the Christ, it lies within the sphere of grace, (by which it is said we are saved,) not within the sphere of nature. And therefore it is not nature that doth the business. We must look upon this as an extra-natural, supernatural production, both as it is our mind, and the very spirit which is to be the seat and subject of it; and as our Lord Jesus, even as he is the Christ, that is to be the great agent therein. But again,

[3.] As this is a birth, so we must consider it to be a total production, such a one as carries an entireness with it: for so it is too with all such productions that are properly called births. A birth is not the production of a leg, or an arm, or an eye, but it is the production of an entire human creature. And so is this work represented: it is called the putting on of a new man. I pray consider this; the words of God are weighty words, and claim to be pondered with serious and deeply considering thoughts. I beseech you, why is that change wrought in regeneration, signified by putting on of a new man? What can it signify less than this, that it must be a total change? The production carries an entireness in it. As you do not call a finger or a toe a man, but the whole fabric and frame animated by a human spirit; this is the man. Now here is an old man "put off, that was corrupt by deceivable lusts," and then a new man put on, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Some way or other, indeed, this renewing work lies bespread through the whole man. Therefore the apostle prayed for the Thessalonians, (1 Epistle, v. 23.) that they might be sanctified throughout in their whole spirit, soul, and body; meaning by the first, the higher and nobler faculties, or, as we may call it, the upper soul. By the second, the lower soul, as it is that seat of internal sense, imagination, appetition, passion, fancy. And then the body, according as that may in a secondary sense be said to be the seat of a sanctifying impression, the several parts of that being now more governable by a rectified mind and spirit, more useable for God, the several parts thereof being so made instruments of righteousness for the serving of God, as the expression is, Rom. vi. 19. It being evident, that where the Spirit of holiness doth obtain and take place, or where the regenerating work is really effected, men do thereupon more make it their business to govern the outward man subserviently to the inner, and the lower soul subservient to the upper; and the very parts of the body, too, subserviceable to both, that they may be instruments for the serving of God. Wherever there is more of the regenerating power and spirit of grace residing and ruling in the inner man, so much the more there will be of a severe restraint, from a divine principle. So much the more there will be of a severe restraint upon licentious, unbridled appetite: so much the more careful such will be to preserve their bodies in a useable posture for the service of God, remembering that even their bodies themselves are the outward temples of a deity. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16. And every man is therefore taught and required to possess his body in sanctification and honour, remembering that even his very flesh itself hath undergone a dedication, being washed with pure water, to signify its being prest into a subserviency to the great God and the Redeemer, under the conduct and government of his Spirit. "Let us draw nigh (we that have lived at a distance, and strangers) with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, to signify, that in body and spirit we have been devoted, Heb. x. 22. agreeing with that 1 Cor. vi. latter end, "You are not your own, you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your spirit, and in your bodies, which are both his." And so by participation, and secondarily, the sanctifying impression comes to obtain in that which is the lowest in the nature of men. They are to be sanctified throughout; therefore this is a total production: that holy rectitude which is effected by regeneration, or this new birth, takes place in every thing belonging to the nature of man. Therefore be not so vague as to imagine, that if there be somewhat done in some one faculty, this is regeneration, or that this speaks a man new born. If now and then there be a right thought injected and cast in, if there be an inclination, some motion or desire; if something of convictive light be struck into a man's conscience; is this regeneration? Is this being new born? No, that makes all things new: "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, all things are become new." There is a new mind, a new judgment, a new conscience, a new will, new desires, new delights, new love, new fear, every thing new. And,

[4.] This birth, as it is a birth, signifies a permanent production, an effect that is permanent, lasting, and continued. This is obvious to every one that considers the common notion of a birth: for whatsoever it is (as to essentials) that any one is, (as he is born,) the same he is to be as long as he lives. Whatsoever he is by birth, as to the essentials of that being which by birth now comes to take place in this world, he is the same thing all his days. Therefore, this must be some permanent, lasting, abiding work and impression upon the soul. It is not some light subetaneous passion that is raised in a moment, and gone in a moment. There may be many such subetaneous passions raised in the souls that live under the Gospel, which vanish and come to nothing; soon raised and soon gone. A sudden thought injected, a beam of convictive light that strikes into the conscience, a pang of terror that seizeth, some sudden rapid workings of desire: O! that my sins were pardoned, O! that there were a peace between God and me! Is this being born? That signifies a work done, which lasts and continues. They that give us an account of qualities, do distinguish between these two things, *patibilis qualitas et passio*. Implying, that the latter of these, though it may be a real thing, yet it may be so sudden a thing, so soon up, so soon down, that one is capable of denomination from it no more than a man is to be known by a sudden blush in his face, or that he should grow unknown because he wants it. This is a continuing thing. He that is by this birth to be denominated to be a believer as to the great faith of the Gospel, that Jesus is the Christ. Is such a one born of God? Yes, as long as he is a believer he is born of God. Doth he believe to the saving of his soul? This impression, by which it is said he is born of God, it is coextensive, it is commensurate; so that it signifies some

other kind of impression than what a man can have to-day and lose to-morrow; or what may vary and alter with him (it may be) twenty times in the same day. For, do but consider the reason of the thing: what a man is when he is born, that he is when he dies; as to essentials he is the same creature all his time.

These are things that plainly and evidently belong to this great production in the soul, even as it is signified by the name of a "birth." That is only taking in that it is a secondary birth, and such a one as whereof our Lord Jesus Christ is the author and immediate agent, and in a pre-existing subject that is changed, and influenced, and wrought upon thereby. But then,

2. There is yet a further and fuller account to be given of this effect and work upon the soul, as it is here signified to be a divine birth; or as he that is said to be a believer with this faith, that Jesus is the Christ, is not only said to be born, but said to be born of God. Accordingly to what we so expressly have by the same apostle in his Gospel, John i. 12, 13. "To as many as have received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And observe this, for it is most observable. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," so saith the text. And that other text first saith, "they that believe on his name," receiving him with such a faith as I have opened to you at large, doth signify such faith by which we truly believe Jesus is the Christ; they are the sons of God, born of God. But do you think any are the sons of God that are not born of God? Therefore, the next words immediately subjoin, "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Here is a divine birth immediately depending upon God. Wheresoever the spirit and power of this faith doth obtain and take place in the soul, so that if any do believe on his name and receive him as Christ, they are the sons of God; because they are born of him. Why should they not be called sons, that have the divine nature in them, resembling God's own? Theirs is not like a human geniture or birth. It is not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. They are heaven born, an immediate divine production.

O what deep thoughts of heart doth all this claim for us! and pray let us bethink ourselves. We here meet as a Christian assembly. You see by this what a Christian is. And all will agree (no doubt) in the common notion, a Christian is one that believeth that Jesus is the Christ. But you see who are reckoned to believe to this purpose, such as are born thereupon another sort of creatures from what they were, and so continue as long as they live: and such as are heaven born, born of God by immediate divine operation and influence, a mighty power from God coming upon their souls, conforming them to God, addicting them to God, uniting them with God, making them to centre in God, taking them off from all this world; so as that it may appear it is not the spirit of this world that hath done this work upon them. We have not received the spirit of this world, such a spirit as unites us with the world, but the spirit that is from God, that suits us to God and to divine things, and makes us savour the things of God, take delight in them, and that attempers us more and more to that state wherein God is to be all in all with us. So as that we are dead in this world. In this sense, to be born is to die. Every one that is thus born, dies at the same time: that is, when he is born to God, and made alive to God through Jesus Christ, he is dead and crucified to the world: it becomes a despicable thing. Hereupon he can be content to stay a little while to serve God, but he cannot endure to be without God in this world. And he hopes not to be in it long neither, but to be with him immediately who is to us our all in all.

It is a great thing to be a Christian! O that it were more understood what the Christian names signifies. If Christianity be not a shadow; if it were not a design unworthy of the descent of the Son of God into this world to bestow upon men a new name, but let them be the same men under that new name, earthly, terrene, impure creatures, and strangers to God as much as ever, only called Christians, as full of carnality, as full of enmity to God and godliness, as full of distempered affections towards one another; in wrath, animosity, envy, self-design in opposition to every thing that stands in their way, ready (if it were in their power) to ruin every body that opposes their secular interest; then Christianity is a great thing. For is this God-like, is it like one born of God, "who is love!" Addictedness to a party, is that to be born of God? Do you think it to be of this or that party is to be born of God? It is to be made a good man, a holy man, a lover of good men and of goodness, be his denomination or name what it will. To be born of God signifies a universalized mind and spirit, that bears some image of the Divine Infinity; not in essence, not in being, not in presence, not in power; that is impossible; but in aim and design, that is, that as He cannot possibly be confined any way, so I will not confine myself. To have a universalized mind and spirit, co-existent (as it were) with the creation, labouring to do all the good that is possible every where, so far as any power of mine can extend; and where no power of mine can extend, thither my desire and prayer shall extend. Such a one as is born of God is like God, ready to scatter every where divine blessings through the world. This is one born of God; that as He fills the whole earth with his goodness, so I would by all acts of benefaction, as much as lies in my compass; never limiting myself in aim or design, though my capacity do never so much limit me.

But these are things that must be enlarged on hereafter. Only let us consider now, how high a pretence it is for any man to pretend himself to be a believer, or a Christian: one that believes Jesus to be the Christ: If I should ask any one this question, Do you believe Jesus to be the Christ? And he answer me suddenly, and without consideration, Yes, I believe Jesus to be the Christ. I would not be so uncharitable as to censure any body that so answers; I would hope that he answers considerately, and as the truth of the matter is. But I would give him all the occasion I could of considering himself and of judging himself, though I will not judge him. Pray think with yourselves what you say, when you say you believe Jesus to be the Christ; for every one that so believes is born of God, and hath that mighty universal change wrought in the very habit of his soul, that makes him imitate God, that conforms him to God, and inclines to God, and makes him value communion with God above all things in this world.

SERMON XLIII.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

But now, to speak more distinctly to this work as it is signified by a divine birth, or being born of God, there are two things of which we must have a distinct consideration: First, the influence by which it is produced; and secondly, the product itself.

(1.) The influence by which it is produced. And that we must carefully distinguish from these two things: First, from what is superior to it in the kind of influence; and secondly, from what is inferior.

[1.] From what is superior to it, and ought to be conceived infinitely superior. And that is the influence by which the eternal Son is begotten of the Father. That cannot be called a created influence, as that which is common to this work with all other creatures must be. But it may be truly procreated, because he is said to be begotten; the only-begotten Son of the Father. Begotten he is, but so begotten as none besides: not so begotten as a creature is. We shall show you the difference by and by. But we are to consider these as infinitely different. The manner by which God is said to beget his own eternal Son, and that by which he doth beget all that are, in the sense of the text, born of him, differ: and especially in these two things lies the difference; first, that the former is eternal, whereas

* Preached April 29th, 1694.

the latter is temporary; and secondly, the former is necessary, whereas the latter is arbitrary. And pray note these two great differences. The former, I say, is,

First, Eternal. He that is said to be the only-begotten Son, "We beheld his glory as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. He is the only-begotten Son in that peculiar and most noble sense, to wit, that he was begotten from eternity. So you find, Micah v. 2. "his goings forth were from everlasting; of old, and from everlasting." So that there was no moment conceivable, not only in time, but in all foregoing eternity, wherein he was not by an everlasting resultancy (as we may speak) from the Father. His goings forth were from everlasting. It is not thus as to creatures; not as to the most excellent sort of creatures, this same more noble creature, the new creature, the divine creature, (being yet but a creature;) it had its beginning, and may have its very late beginning, as all creatures do begin to be at one time or other. And,

Secondly, The influence in the former is necessary; in reference to the latter, this and all other creatures are but arbitrary. Whatever is created is created by an arbitrary influence. "For thy pleasure, or by thy will (as those words, Rev. iv. 11. may be read) they are and were created." Whatsoever is created, is the product of the Divine will, depends upon an antecedent act of will, determining whether it shall be or not be. But this could not be the case as to the eternal generation of the Son, even from thence, (as it hath been said,) that it was "from everlasting:" for whatsoever did depend upon an act of will, determining whether it should be or not be, that is an antecedent of will; not concomitant, but antecedent; and so whether it should be or not be, must have had a beginning, and could not be pre-existent, could not be from all eternity. Though indeed such productions may be to all eternity, (as it is with the spirits and souls of men,) they cannot have been from all eternity, if it depend upon choice whether they should be or not be. But the other was a generative influence, that did not depend upon choice, but necessity of nature. He was the Son by natural, necessary, eternal promanation; as necessarily the Son, as the Father the Father; he resulting from him as his everlasting substantial image. As if the sun in the firmament, instead of projecting its beams round about, did invert them, and so there were a necessary production of a sun in a sun, not depending upon choice, but from an everlasting necessity of nature; so he is said to be the only-begotten Son of the Father. Though he hath many sons, as you that are said to be begotten, and born of him; but in an inferior sense, as a greater difference cannot be supposed than to be from necessity of nature, and to be from arbitrary choice, at will and pleasure. "Of his own will begat he us, to be the first-fruits of his creatures;" James i. 18. he did it when he might not have done it. That is one distinction that is necessary to be made in this case, between this begetting and what is infinitely inferior to it, to wit, that of the only-begotten Son of God. But then,

[2.] We are to distinguish it too from that which is unspeakably inferior to it, as well as that which is superior; that is, we are to distinguish it from the production of inferior things, that are of a lower nature and value, which though they are called God's creatures, yet are they never in any sense to be called his sons. And we must therefore consider the special kind and nature of this productive influence in this respect, as it is to be distinguished from all that which is merely creative, and not generative at all. It is true, indeed, that the generative influence is creative too within the universe of created beings, so as that God's children as such are his creatures: for they are called new creatures. But though all his children are his creatures, yet all his creatures are not his children. There is somewhat peculiar not only in respect of the thing produced, but in respect of the productive influence too. And so we must note to you these differences:

First, that this difference is spiritual, I say; it is purely spiritual. It is called so, both in respect of the cause and of the effect. As it is from the cause, and as it terminates in the effect, so we are given to understand that it is spiritual; it hath the name of Spirit put upon it, John iii. 6. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is Spirit producing, and spirit produced thereby. The influential cause, as such, is the Divine Spirit, (for we consider now the spirituality of the influence, not of the thing produced thereby.) "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, (or the Holy Ghost,) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is not enough (as if he should have said) that a man be baptized; that will not do the business, that may leave him short of regeneration, of heaven, and the kingdom of God. It is spoken by way of allusion to the Jewish baptisms that were before the Christian institution; for there were two sorts of proselytes among the Jews; (long before Christianity under that name came to obtain in the world;) those that were called proselytes of the gate, and those that were called proselytes of justice. And for the latter sort, they were always admitted into the Jewish church by baptism; and therefore doth our Saviour justly upbraid it to Nicodemus, that he being a master in Israel, should understand so little of the mysteries of regeneration. "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" Dost thou not understand the meaning of a usage so common among yourselves? For at those baptisms they used to have a new father and a new mother, new kindred, new brethren, new sisters, declaratively. This was a thing wont to be declared in the solemnity of those baptisms, as their own records inform. Now, saith our Saviour, dost thou think this thing, so used among yourselves, had no meaning? Art thou a master in Israel, one of the teachers and doctors, and dost not understand this thing; that besides the external, significant baptism, there must be a signified internal baptism? And what could that be but the baptism of the Holy Ghost, renewing the nature, transforming the soul, altering the habitual inclination, creating a new man, a new divine creature? So that it must be a mighty penetrative, spiritual influence, full of vital life and vigour diffused through the soul, that makes this birth, when one is said to be born of God. There is a spiritual production, and it is of Spirit. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit: under that notion, and as such we conceive it in relation to action, it speaks a mighty vigour, and vivacity, and operativeness. For matter, as matter can effect nothing, work nothing, it hath no operativeness, no *vis*, no energy in it, it is a mere passive thing; but the fountain of all activity, life and vigour, is Spirit, a spiritual being; and the generative influence in this work is such.

Secondly, It is intellectual as well as spiritual; such as carries mental light in it. For when God doth this work upon souls, he is said to shine into them. God that commanded light to shine out of darkness, "hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ." He doth this work as the Father of lights. "Every good gift and perfect giving proceeds from the Father of lights," James i. 17. Even as it is such; whereupon (as we shall in the proper place come to note to you) these children are called "children of light," as he is the "Father of lights." And whereas the thing produced is the Divine image, this is to be renewed in knowledge, or, "they are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created them," Col. iii. 10. After the image of their Creator, who is the fountain of all knowledge and wisdom. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are originally and essentially in God, and communicatively and derivately in Christ, they are all hid in him. And so there is a derivation even in this work, unto the effect produced; and therefore it must be considered in the productive influence. Here is a radiation of light into the soul. He hath "called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." The light of divine truth, by which these great things that do concern us God-ward are revealed which were all his before. Therefore as to the matter of the production, or the productive influence, these are said to be "born of God." These children of God are said to be born of Divine truth; which is that light which shines into the soul, exhibiting to us such things, not as will satisfy curiosity, but necessity—answer the necessary purposes of our souls. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be to him the first-fruits of his creatures." And, 1 Pet. i. 23. "Being born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," Divine truth: "seeing you have purified your souls (as it is said

before) in obeying the truth." They had received that truth which carried with it a transforming power, by which they became subdued thereunto, and were made to receive the impression thereof, according to that of our Saviour, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. "And we give thanks always to God, for you, (saith the apostle to the Thessalonians,) that God hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 13. So that divine truth and light is the immortal seed out of which this divine production springs in the soul. The productive influence is illuminative; divine truth, in the light and lustre and glory of it, being darted into the very heart, hath made light to shine into the heart, even the light of the knowledge of God's own glory, 2 Cor. iv. 6. And again,

Thirdly, It is a powerful influence which is productive of this blessed work. It is true, that whatsoever work is done by God, is done by an omnipotent agent, but not always as such; for we must not look upon him as a merely natural or involuntary agent, that doth in every thing what he can; as the fire burns all that it can, and the sun shines as much as it can. The case is not so in the matter of divine agency; but he doth exert more or less of his power as it seems him good, and as the matter doth require. It is power, being under the regulation of his wisdom and his will in every thing he doth; for it would be very unreasonable and absurd to think there should be the same emission of Divine power and virtue in the production of a worm as in the production of an angel. Therefore, the almightiness of his power he attempers and proportioneth, by his wisdom and choice, to the effect to be produced. But there is a mighty exertion of power in this work, when he begins the new creature; when he is not only to bring a thing out of nothing, but, (which requires a greater exertion of power,) he is to bring a contrary out of his contrary, light out of darkness, holiness out of the greatest impurity, love to himself out of the highest enmity. This is a mighty egression of Divine power; when there are but additions to be made in this kind in the soul, we find what it requires by what is prayed for. "We pray for you, (saith the apostle, Eph. iii. 16.) that God would grant you to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man;" and that he will do so "according to the riches of his glory;" implying that there must be a mighty exertion of the glory of the Divine power, in order to an additional work, in order to the superadding some further degree unto what hath been wrought powerfully already; "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you." And the expressions are of equal import, to the same purpose, which we have Col. i. 11. The apostle there prays for the Colossians, that in order to their walking worthy of the Lord to all well pleasing, and in order to their being fruitful in every good work, and in order to their increasing in the knowledge of God, to wit, their religion, (that being a periphrastical expression thereof, the knowledge of God being a periphrasis of whole Christianity,) that they may be "strengthened with all might according to his glorious power." There needed a continual exertion of all might, and such as should accord to and agree with the glorious power of God himself, in order to their progress and increase of grace and holiness; and therefore much more must the first beginning of such a work as this in the soul require a very glorious exertion of Divine power.

And whereas therefore in this work there is a communication and participation of the Divine nature, this is signified to be his divine power. If you look to 2 Pet. i. ver. 3, 4. compared, "According as his divine power hath given us all things appertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature." Here is a divine nature to be communicated and imparted in this great and glorious work. How is it to be communicated? It is true it must be by apt and suitable means; to wit, by the great and precious promises given us in the Gospel. But it must be by the exertion too of a divine power. Though God do work suitably to an intelligent nature when he works upon such subjects, yet he works also suitably to himself, "according as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness," or to the godly life; in order to the ingenerating the godly life his divine power hath given us by the exceeding great and precious promises, a divine nature. The instrumentality and subserviency of these "exceeding great and precious promises," is greatly to be considered, God working herein suitably to the nature of an intelligent subject. Here is a change to be wrought in his nature, a nature that is corrupt, depraved, averse from God, alienated from the divine life; this nature is now to be attempered to God, made suitable to him, made propense and inclined towards him. This might be done, it is true, by an immediate exertion of Almighty power, without any more ado. But God will work upon men suitably to the nature of man. And what course doth he therefore take? He gives "exceeding great and precious promises," and in them he declares his own good will, that he might win theirs. In order to the ingenerating grace in them, he reveals grace to them by these great and precious promises. And what is grace in us? Truly grace in us is good will towards God, or good nature towards God; which can never be without a transformation of our vicious, corrupt nature. It will never incline towards God, or be propense towards God, till he make it so by a transforming power. But how doth he make it so? By discovering his kindness and goodness to them in "exceeding great and precious promises," satisfying and persuading their hearts; I mean nothing but kindness towards you, why should you be unkind towards me? I am full of good will towards you, will you requite it with perpetual ill will, and everlasting enmity towards me? Thus the "exceeding great and precious promises" are instruments to the communicating a divine nature to us, though that divine nature be ingenerated by a mighty power. God doth work at the rate of omnipotency in the matter by the exertion of almighty power; but yet suitably to our nature, so as to express his mind, and kind design, and good will, by the exceeding great and precious promises contained in the Gospel.

And if it were not so, he might as well make use of any other means as the Gospel, to work upon souls by. But the Gospel is the word of his grace. "To testify the Gospel of the grace of God," that is my business, saith the apostle, as a minister of Christ, and for which he did not reckon his life too valuable or too costly a thing to be sacrificed; "That I may testify the Gospel of the grace of God, my life is not dear to me," Acts xx. 24. I can be contented to throw away a hundred such lives as this, in testifying the Gospel of the grace of God. But what was it to be testified for? That God by this testimony might insinuate into so ill-natured hearts and spirits, and set them right towards him; plead effectually with them, and expostulate the matter. Why should you be everlasting strangers to me, who mean nothing but kindness and good-will towards you? Why should you choose to live as without me in the world? Why should you be always alienated from the life of God, when he is seeking after you, and would impart his grace and glory to you? It is in this way, and by such means, that the Divine power works, in order to the production of a divine nature; a nature that will incline towards God, work towards him, as it carried men away from him before. And then,

Fourthly, The influence by which this work is done, it is a merciful, compassionate influence; an influence of grace exerted and put forth, with the height of divine pity towards miserable creatures that must be lost and undone; being liable to an eternal hell, and who are a present hell to themselves, till such a work as this be done in them. For though, alas, such poor creatures will not consider it themselves, God doth consider with compassion the horrid, forlorn state of unrenewed souls: where his regenerating influence as yet hath had no place or effect, they are not only liable to eternal wrath (whereupon they are said to be by nature the children of wrath) by the inclinations and propensions of their own vicious nature, that hath set them at enmity with God, at enmity with one another, and set them at enmity with themselves. They are not only, I say, liable to eternal wrath by the inclination of their own nature, to which that tends to carry them, and to

which it suits them; but they are a present hell to themselves, as every unrenewed soul is. If you consider the constituent parts of hell, loss and torment; loss of the best good, torment by the worst evil; there are both these in kind in this present state, though they are both higher in degree hereafter. But in kind, both do fall into the present state of an unregenerate soul.

i. The misery of loss. They are without God in the world: Ephes. ii. 12. "without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world." They do not reflect upon this; but if occasion were given them to consider the state of their case, and they would truly consider it, whatsoever their straits and necessities are, they must needs say,—I do not know which way in the world to turn myself; I have no God to go to, none to whom mine heart inclines, none in whom I can justly pretend myself to have a present interest; I must bear all my burdens alone; in the midst of my wants I have no God; in the midst of my enjoyments I have no God; no God to supply my wants, no God to sweeten my enjoyments. This is their forlorn case. And if,

ii. You look to the misery of torment, which is the other constituent part of hell, there must be that in degree in every unrenewed soul. And so they have the same misery in kind that they shall have hereafter, for all degrees are comprehended in the kind. And therefore the lowest degree speaks the true kind, the same kind. Some degrees they have of it now, even of that torment which belongs to the present state, that of an unrenewed soul as such; for, being unreconciled to God, they are not capable of being reconciled to themselves; that is, the power and faculties of their souls with one another; but light prompts them one way, and inclination carries them another way. It is true there is somewhat of this warring in the regenerate too; but then the prevailing principle doth agree with their light; the prevailing principle in their hearts doth agree with the light in their minds, and is the victorious principle. There is a disposition to contend against light; but the holy gracious principle there doth ordinarily and habitually prevail against the corrupt and sinful principle. But the case is quite otherwise with unregenerate souls; to wit, in the stated course and current of their lives, they run counter to the judgment of their consciences; as no man's conscience but must condemn an ungodly life, living as "without God in the world;" but so they live their lives, and transact the whole course and current of their lives at that ungodly rate, without fear of God, without the love of God, without praying to him, without depending on him, without designing for him in a continued course. Why here is the self-tormenting principle laid asleep only in such souls; that is, if ever they should reflect, they must consider themselves in a state of war with God, and with their own consciences, which are God's vicegerents, and are to govern over them in his right. If conscience were awake, and would do its office, that self-tormenting principle would presently and repeatedly tell them, Thou art a rebel against God and me; thou dost what thy light condemns thee for; God is cast out of thy soul, thy thoughts, thy affections, thy mind and heart; thy life is a continual war and rebellion against Heaven. It is true, instead of mortifying their corruptions, they make a shift to mortify their consciences, and so they are not clamorous, nor do give them actual torment; but the tormenting principle is there, and needs only awakening, and will awaken sooner or later, too late, if God be not merciful. But because he is merciful, therefore is such a transaction set on foot between him and them. And it is a compassionate influence suited to the sad and forlorn case wherein men are liable to hell, and are a present hell to themselves. It is a merciful influence which is vouchsafed in such a case.

Do but look back to the 2d Ephesians, where men are said to be "children of wrath by nature," one as well as another; it is immediately subjoined in the next words, "But God, who is rich in mercy, according to his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ;" hath inspired us with a new life, a divine and holy life, which is another expression of the same thing signified by "the divine nature." This is an influence in which grace breathes, in which mercy governs. "God, who is rich in mercy," hath saved us by quickening us together in Christ, infusing a new divine life into us, which will be eternal life, as certainly as a vicious, corrupted, depraved nature, continuing unrenewed and what it was, will end in eternal death. So that as they are children of wrath, and sinners of hell by that very nature, so, by this divine nature now imparted by God's rich mercy, there is a sacred and sure pledge of life eternal, wherein that will end. And to the same purpose is Tit. iii. ver. 3, 4, 5. The apostle speaks of what naturally we all were; "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures; living in malice, hateful, and hating one another: but after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." This then is a most merciful influence that is given forth in the regenerating work. It is as if God should have said, I see these poor creatures are perishing, not only tending to hell, but carrying with them their own hell into hell, "hell being at last cast into hell," (as the expression in the Revelation is.) It is a throwing hell into hell, when a wicked man comes to hell; for he was his own hell before. God beholding this forlorn case of wretched creatures, saith, I must either renew them or loose them; I must either transform them, or they must perish; they are in fire of hell already. Such and such we were, but of his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing by the Holy Ghost. O! the compassionate influence that is shed upon a soul in this case! The balmy dews that descend from heaven upon a distempered soul, which quench the flames of lust, and which implant and invigorate (after their implantation) a divine principle, in-create a new life, that leads to God and Christ, and the way of holiness and heaven at last. This "being born of God" must imply, if we consider the productive influence by which this blessed work is effected. We are afterwards to consider the effect itself produced: in general God's own image inwrought into the soul, which we must understand by an influence, or exerted virtue, suitable to the thing to be produced, as well as suitable to the productive cause.

SERMON XLIV.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

And now, besides the peculiarity that appears in the productive influence, we are to show you what peculiarities there are in the thing produced. It is the divine image itself, the permanent divine image. The influence is transient by which the effect is wrought, not only as it doth *transire* from God, but as it doth pass into the effect which it doth leave behind it. It doth *relinquere post se opus*, it leaves behind it a work wrought and done; and the work wrought and done hath a fixed permanent divine signature or impress upon it, by which it may be seen this is a divine production. Here are such resemblances of God in this work now done, that it may be plainly seen here is one born of God, or there is somewhat born of God in this soul, or in this person, as the matter is most emphatically expressed, to wit, in the neuter gender, afterwards in this very chapter, "Whatsoever is born of God," the thing born of God; to signify to us, that it is not the person as such; (for then Nicodemus's question could not have been answered, "How shall a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?") but there is something done in the person which is a divine product in this work. "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." The same thing that is signified before in this same epistle "by the divine seed," permanent and remaining in such a one, chap. iii. 8.

* Preached May 13th, 1694.

Whence it is that he cannot commit sin, that is, as such he cannot, as such he never can commit it; be a doer of it in a continual course, as such it is impossible he should. The seed remaining inhibits, withholds him from it. Here now our thoughts are to stay and take up in contemplating this fixed, permanent, divine image, that comes into the soul by this productive influence in regeneration, or when a person is said to be born of God.

And for this now you must know, that two things do concur and meet in this work, when it comes to be entered into its fixed state, passing from the *fieri* to be *facto esse;* that is, from its being a-doing, and its being actually and fully done. Two things, I say, must be considered as concurring; to wit, first, the working out of a former image, and, secondly, the introducing and working in of this. The working out a former: it is in the sphere of grace, as it is in the sphere of nature, that *generatio unius* is *corruptio alterius.* The introducing of a new form is the expulsion of an old; the putting on of a new man is necessarily accompanied with and led on by "the putting off the old man, which is corrupt by deceivable lusts." But when we consider what the former image was, that is to be abolished and razed out, that will very much make way for the more full and distinct understanding what sort of image it is that must intervene and be introduced. And for that reason it will be requisite to say somewhat to that too.

And we may easily apprehend, if we do but reflect in our own thoughts, the two terms between which the soul of man doth move from the one to the other. The soul in its state of apostacy from God, there were somewhat or other when it left him, which it made defection to. And so in its return to God, there is somewhat it goes off from, when it comes into a state of union with him. And according as the terms are of recess and approach, so the *exemplaria* are, the exemplars, according to which the soul is formed and moulded; for it will bear the image of that which it doth converse with, and most converse with. The two terms between which it was always divided were, this world and God; the inferior creature and created good on the one hand, and the supreme and uncreated good on the other hand. Here is an impress or image of the former to be abolished, when the image of the latter is to be introduced. The soul did adhere to this world as its only best good, before regeneration; there was hereupon a worldly image on it; that is to be abolished, it is to return to God; and by regeneration, therefore, must be suited to God, and so have a divine image impressed upon it in order thereupon.

These are the two terms between which the motions of the soul are, this world and God; when it left God, it betook itself to this world; when it returns to God, it leads and comes off from the world, and accordingly are the images which successively obtain and take place in it. Therefore you have that strict interdict upon all them that would make a tender of themselves to God, in order to which that great work of being renewed in the spirit of their minds must pass upon them. "Be not conformed to this world," Rom. xii. 2. Here is a tender to be made of ourselves to God, not as a dead thing, but as living; we are made alive in the work of regeneration, of which he there speaks, "be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds," or "transformed in the renewing of your minds." But here is a foregoing form that they must be divested of, "be not conformed to this world," if you pretend to God, if you will be for him; if you offer yourselves to him as "a living sacrifice, be not conformed to this world;" that is an inconsistency to offer to God a mundane thing, a worldly thing, that which carries the impress of this world upon it; you offer to him an abomination, that which he must abhor—you offer him a sacrifice that smells of impure earth, that hath (as it were) the reek of a dunghill;—what, will you offer that to him? No; "be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable will of God," as there it followeth. This is a great thing; and we do nothing in considering either the work of believing in Christ as the Messiah, or in considering, much less in experiencing, the work of regeneration which is conjunct therewith, if we understand not what it is to come off from this world, and to have the worldly image and impress abolished and defaced in us, so as that it shall not be a prevailing thing, a regnant thing, any longer. And to this purpose you must know that the image which we are to bear, or which we have borne, it is not superficial only, it is not an outside thing; but if we have the image of this earth upon us, we have it in our very souls, the world is set in our hearts, it is in us another nature, a worldly and terrene nature; that is it wherein the image lies; not in an outside, but we are in spirit, and in our very natures, contempered to this world. We read therefore of a spirit and a spirit opposite to one another in this matter. As there are those two terms between which the motion of the soul lies, so there are two motive principles, and each of them called spirit, the spirit which is of this world, and the Spirit which is of God; it is this spirit that operates either to work the one image or the other. The spirit of this world, that forms us to the world; the Spirit of God forms us to God, and suits us to his communion and converse. You find, 1 Cor. ii. 12. that so the state of the case is represented, that a contest is continually kept up, and will be kept up by the Spirit of God against the spirit of this world; and is kept up till there be an overcoming by the spirit of this world against the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is from God. It is not a mundane spirit; that spirit that now comes upon us is another spirit, and is to work out the former impress, and introduce a new one. And so is the case again stated in the fourth chapter of this epistle, at verse 4. that the spirit that is in this world and the Spirit which is from God are engaged, as it were, in a war one against the other: "Little children, ye are of God, and have overcome the world; because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world;" and he that is the greater, he that is in you, is to work out the former worldly impress and to introduce the new one; and he will do so in all that are regenerate. And therefore, these two things in reference to this wordly spirit and image must be understood to be done; and pray consider it, for it concerns the souls of us all.

First, there must be an opposition by the Divine Spirit unto the spirit of this world, the worldly genius, so as thereby gradually more to work and wear off the worldly impress from such a soul. You see there is a war, an opposition; "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The spirit that works in this world doth lift up itself; but there is a greater power that is exerted and put forth; he speaks of a contest that is between spirit and spirit. "Hereby ye know the Spirit of God;" and by a contrary character it is implied we are to discern and distinguish the spirit of this world; but these are militating and warring one against another. In short, this is the matter of contest, God would have our hearts and souls, this world it would retain them which before had them; and this is the case with every one of us, every one that hears in this assembly; either this world hath your hearts, or God hath them. Where the Spirit of God comes to work, (and it worketh by the Gospel of his Son,) the great design of its striving and working is to draw off the hearts and souls of men from this world, that they may be united to himself; and in order thereunto, to work out the worldly image, their likeness to this world and their conformity to it. They that are of this world bear its impress; and nothing is gustful and savoury to them but what is worldly and terrene. As God makes his own way, he introduceth a new savour of things; as they are made less like to this world, and more like to God, accordingly they do less savour the things of this world, and do more savour the things of God. They are emphatical expressions you find to this purpose in some passages of Scripture, which you do well to compare with one another. In ch. iv. v. vi, of this epistle, you will see how men are distinguished; there is one sort of whom it is said, "We are of God," born of God, regenerated ones, (as you have heard that passage is sometimes contracted.) We are of God; well, but how doth that appear? "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." And hereby it is that spirits are distinguished, which spirit is regular; they that are regenerate are of God, and then they hear the things of God, the word of God with gust, with

savour and relish; it is according to the image, the impress, they have upon them; if they be like this world they can savour nothing else but the things of the world. "They that are of the world, speak of the world, and the world heareth them," as at verse 5, of this chapter. Worldly minded men can discourse with one another of the things of the world all the day long with gust and relish, and never be weary; but the things of God they have no relish, no savour of. Therefore there is a diverse impression upon the mind and spirit of the one and of the other. To the same purpose is that John viii. 43. "Why do ye not understand my speech?" saith our Saviour, "even because ye cannot hear my words." You cannot hear them; there is another gust and relish of things with you; they cannot enter into you, as he saith a little before in the same chapter; "My word hath no place in you." There is no likeness, no similitude or agreement between the impression, influence, and tenor of my words and your minds; your minds disagree, are otherwise impressed and otherwise tinctured. So in verse 47 of the same chapter, "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." You have nothing divine in you, nothing of the distinguishing work, therefore you cannot hear the words of God. This is one thing concerning this image to be abolished, to wit, there must be an opposition to it wherever the contrary image is to be introduced. And,

Secondly, There must be a victory over it, to which that opposition tends; and it is to no purpose if it have not that glorious end, if it do not end in this. Indeed there may be strivings that have a worse end, as in that 2 Pet. ii. 20. some that do escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge [oh, sad word] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, (in a degree,) who are again entangled therein, and overcome, and their end is worse than their beginning. But this regenerating work doth effect and bring about actual victory over this world and its spirit, so as to disentangle a man's heart from it. And pray observe to this purpose what you have in the context where the text lies, that, as in this verse, you hear what is said, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;" so it is also told us at verse 4. that "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And that he might give to understand that he speaks consistently with himself, pursuantly to his design in verse 5. he adds, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" He that hath this faith in him is a conqueror over this world; if it be this faith indeed, not the name, not the show, not the mock show of it only. And let this now be gladly thought of, "He that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God; he that is born of God, overcometh the world;" first taking this sound and sense of it, that is, that whoever is born of God, is by the new birth become so noble, so raised, and so altered a creature, that he can be no longer a slave to this world only. What, are the sons of God, his children, to be slaves? If they are born of him, he is their Father, and they are his sons. What more monstrous absurdity can be conceived, than that a son of God, and born of God by a divine birth, should be held afterwards to so base a thing as this world is? What, do you think that the sons of God are to be in a state of slavery? No; so soon as they are born they conquer, they overcome. That is, the Divine principle in them is a victorious principle. And so the other image (though there be fragments of it) is not entire, it is broken, and there can be but fragments. It is not the spirit of this world that is reigning and governing, but another spirit; and hereupon this is observable in the very complexion of their spirits, they can use the things of this world as other men do, but they do not entirely enjoy them, so as to rest in them, or to get their rest from them; but their tendency is higher; they in the most true sense possible possess them, but are not possessed by them; they are proprietors in the truest sense of the things of this world, to wit, by a restored right from God; he hath renewed their right, hath given them a right that was forfeited and lost; and so are they in a true sense owners of what portion he allows them in this world; under him they are owners and possessors; they do possess, but are not possessed; other men, unregenerate men, do not; they do not so truly and properly possess this world as they are possessed by it; those that are ignorant, are lords and masters of it; but for great men, that is master of them, they are slaves to it; worldly desires, worldly inclinations, worldly interests, worldly designs engross them, and swallow them up; they are ingulfed of this world, and possessed by it; they have not a power over it, but it hath a power over them. See what a spirit of liberty as to this the apostle describes, 1 Cor. vi. 12. "All things are lawful unto me," (speaking of such things as he refers to, the lawful use of the creatures,) any thing to which I have an inclination; this or that sort of creature that I have need of, I may lawfully enjoy them; but nothing hath that power over me that I cannot distinguish between expedient and inexpedient; but I may covet too much of that which is in itself simply a lawful thing, and so turn it into unlawful. And how doth he expound it? why, thus—that he kept himself from being under the power of any thing—"all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." And even among these things it is that he resolved he would be under the power of nothing. Here is the difference in reference to the state of the two, between the regenerate and unregenerate, and that with relation to this world. Whatsoever the unregenerate man's heart is set upon in this world, it hath him under its power; it hath power over him, so that he shapes and grounds his course accordingly; doth not consider whether he shall walk by rule or not by rule, whether he shall please God or displease him, but only considers, shall I please myself? or is this a thing which I find suitable to my purpose? will it serve my end? I find it will be grateful, will it be otherwise serviceable to me? And so are the questions determined; all disputes end and are decided in this manner; and so this world hath him continually under its power. They are lords and masters of nothing of it; though every thing that is grateful and most suitable to them is master of them, and hath the power over them. But whatsoever "is born of God overcometh the world," brings it under, prevails, and tramples over worldly inclinations; that is, the Divine and heavenly principle, so far as it does obtain, is a victor. It is a hero, a divine birth that is produced. It was said of that great hero among the pagans, (Hercules,) that in his cradle he strangled two serpents. They are the things of this world that the old serpent tempts by, and preys upon the souls of men to their destruction. But one that is born of God overcomes. When the regenerating principle takes place, it makes the slave a victor; he that was a slave to this world before is now a conqueror. There is then a worldly image wrought out, that was inwrought by the spirit of the world, and maintained till the work of regeneration be found to take place; and then is the Divine image introduced: which is the next thing here to speak of, and to show the resemblance of God in that which will appear in many particulars hereafter to be mentioned.

Only methinks upon what hath been said, this should be considered: A believer as to this truth, Jesus is the Christ, is one born of God. Methinks it should make every one lay his hand upon his heart, and say, Will I now adventure to call myself a believer, to avow and profess myself I am one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ? Take heed of compounding together inconsistencies. We shall compound together perfect inconsistencies if we do but admit the notion into our minds of an unregenerate believer? An unregenerate believer? To say so is to speak falsely, to say that which overthrows itself. There can be no such thing as an unregenerate believer, otherwise than in sound. You compound together impossibilities, incompossibilities, things that cannot consist. Every one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God. Upon the whole, then, it is a great assuming to say, I am a believer; yes, it is a great assuming. It is a great thing for any one to say so. God forbid but that there should be many, that many may hourly say so. But they that say so, say a great thing; and they had need weigh and consider what they say when they say this, I am a believer; for in this same breath you say, (or imply it, whether you say it or no,) I am born of God, I am a heaven-born creature, I am of a divine original, I am of God, because stampt with his image, and governed by the

Holy Ghost. Either blot this text out of the Bible, or own the truth of this, that it is a great assuming to say, I believe Jesus to be the Christ. Do you say, I believe so. I pray thou thinkest with the next thought, Am I born of God? Do I find the springings of divine life in me? Do I find the worldly spirit abolished, vain self brought under in me? I say again, either blot this text out of the Bible, or own it a mighty thing to say thou believest Jesus to be the Christ; for to say that, is to say, I am a divine and heaven-born creature. And if it be not to say that, Christianity is the greatest fable in the world. It is to no purpose to believe Jesus to be the Christ, if this be not the effect of it, that God have thereby a regenerate seed raised out of this world, and fitted for him, to serve him in this world, and enjoy him in the next world.

SERMON XLV.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

BUT now to proceed to the second part, the product of itself, which is much more a distinguishing work, and that whereof he himself is the exemplar and pattern, as well as the author. He is not only the efficient but the exemplary cause of it; for this divine product is not only a new creature, but it is a creature formed for God. As it is a creature, it must be made by him; for there is but one Creator; but it is not only of him, but after him; a creature made after God's image, that carries his resemblance in it. And for opening of this we proposed to show you, that there is in this work a suitableness to God. Whether, 1st, you do consider the productive influence; or whether, 2d, you consider the effect produced. We showed that it cannot but be (as to the productive influence) most peculiarly God-like in several respects. Though here also we distinguished it from the eternal generation of the only begotten Son of God, as it was necessary we should. But we told you in what respects the influence is peculiarly divine by which the work is done. And then,

(2.) We mean to show, that there is suitableness to God in the thing produced. The influence is transient, the effect is permanent; and then show there must be a permanent abiding influence of God upon that soul that is regenerate and born of him.

And whereas this word (as you see) expressed by being born, it therefore necessarily enforceth relation (as the latter part of this text speaks) between him that begat and them that are begotten of him. There is paternity and filiation, fatherhood and sonship. He becoming hereupon a father to them and they children to him, for the relation is mutual, as it cannot but be. And you see it is supposed in the close of the second chapter, and beginning of the third chapter, of this epistle. Every one that is righteous is born of him, so the second chapter ends; and thereupon doth the third chapter begin thus, "Behold, what manner of love is this that the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God?" Upon their being begotten of him, he is a father to them, and they are sons and children to him. So the matter is more definitely explained, 2 Cor. vi. last: "I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Why, now upon this must be a suitableness to God in this product itself.

1st, He is a father to them; and, 2d, As they are children to him. Then with such things in the frame and constitution (as I may speak) that corresponds to God as having been their father, and that corresponds to their being his children. And you plainly see afterwards, that these things are widely different, according as paternity and filiation are different; they are not the same relation, though they are both a resemblance of each other.

[1.] You must therefore expect to find in them that are born of God several things suitable to him, as he is a father to them, or (as the latter part of the verse expresseth it) as it is he that begat them, hath propagated and communicated a certain divine nature to them, 2 Pet. i. 4. And these things are not to be considered with neglect, for eternity depends upon it. According as there is a real God-like communication unto souls in this world, so they are to be disposed of in the other world. The thing speaks itself. This is not a new and singular notion; but common to all Christians, of whatsoever denomination and persuasion, as it is most expressly in the word of truth, that without being thus born, born of God, born of the Spirit, there is no entering into, no seeing of the kingdom of God, John iii. 3, 6. And you have it under the eternal seal of our Lord's amen, four times affixed in those two verses. I say unto you, he that is the Amen hath given it under that seal, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into (he cannot so much as see) the kingdom of God." Therefore we had need to take heed how we hear such matters of such weight and importance as this. God is not trifling with us when he sends to deal with us in the ministry of his word. Consider then wherein the divine character is impressed suitable to God as a father must appear in them that are born of him. And as that which is most fundamental,

First, There is a resemblance of God in this divine product, in a refined spirituality; in such a spirituality as by which the soul is refined from the sinful prevailing carnality of mind that is common universally to the unregenerate world. It is plain concerning the generality of unregenerate men, that their minds are habitually carnal, and a carnal mind doth actually govern their lives and hearts, and influence all their actions and designs. It is quite otherwise with them that are born of God. You are now here to consider,

i. That this similitude to God is not corporal, which was the vague and gross notion of the Anthropomorphites of old; they understood that there must be in man a likeness to God, they imagined God to be in a human shape; and so that men are made therefore like unto that, and must be made more and more like; and so they did not make him a model to us, but made us a model to him; instead of having made us like God, they made God altogether like themselves. Nor,

ii. Doth this similitude to God in this respect stand, on the other hand, in being exempt from having any body at all, or any corporeity. It is not in that we are to resemble God. That is the opposite doctrine of them who of old denied the resurrection of the body; as if that must be too mean a state to have a part after any body at all; and so we should never be perfectly like God till we were perfectly free from having corporeity about us. Nor again,

iii. Doth it stand in having a spirit in us; for that is not a distinguishing thing, so have all the sons of men. As the regenerate have all of them flesh, so have the unregenerate every one of them a spirit in the natural sense. But,

iv. This similitude doth stand in reference to this thing, in having the spirit exalted into dominion, a regency, a governing power. Whereas in the unregenerate world it is the fleshly principle that governs every where. They have a spirit in them, but that spirit is a slave to the flesh, made to serve divers lusts and pleasures. That is all the business in which men do generally employ that intellectual spiritual being that is in them; a reasonable, immortal spirit is used in serving and making provision for this flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof. And because the fleshly principle is the governing principle in the generality of men, therefore they are called nothing but flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Their very minds are said to be carnalized, vainly puft up with a fleshly mind, Col. ii. 18. Their very minds and consciences are impure, tinctured with the vain tincture of carnality upon it, Tit. i. 15. This is the great thing then to be effected by regeneration, or in this divine birth; God doth in compassion to the work of his own hands, to the spirit which he hath made, restore it out of that state of base servitude wherein it was. It was a servant to base lusts and pleasures, Tit. iii. 3, 4. But when the kindness and love of God towards man appeared, according to his mercy he saved us by the washing

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of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Whereby it is that he exalts this sunk, depressed spirit, that was immersed in flesh, buried in flesh, where it should but dwell. Flesh should have been its mansion, but it became and was made its grave, its dormitory. But by regeneration this spirit is raised into dominion; it is the spirit that is fetched out of the grave, and made a governing thing over the flesh, over all natural appetites and desires. That is the product in the work of regeneration, this is the thing produced and brought forth. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John iii. 6. Signifying that the spirit of a man, whilst it remains a servant and slave to natural inclinations, hath even forfeited its name; it is no more worthy to be called spirit.

The denomination is taken from what is prevailing and governing. If the natural principle do prevail, this compound now is called nothing but flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." But when the spiritual principle is revived and authorized, made the governing principle of the man, it then regains its name, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

For that it signifies nothing unto that conformity to God, which being born of him doth import, that there is such a thing as a natural spirit in man, when that natural spirit doth not do its office, or retain its state, doth not keep the throne, but is become basely and meanly servile. And the tragedy is so much the greater in this respect, and the more deplorable, by how much the less apprehensive and sensible the unregenerate soul is of the state of its own case. By how much the more excellent and noble powers it hath belonging to it, it is so much the more fearful spectacle to behold and look upon, to see it enslaved to sense, and brought into the state of so vile a depression, and is become so mean and abject a thing. As the son of a prince captured in his infancy, and made a base drudge, he is so much the more a deplorable thing, by how much the more his spirit is depressed and sunk into that state into which he is brought; so as that he likes his servitude, his spirit is grown hard, perfectly (perhaps) ignorant of his true original. So it is with the souls of men generally; they are unapprehensive of their own original excellency and dignity, and are content to serve and be voluntary slaves to divers lusts and pleasures, till regenerating grace be vouchsafed. But now it becomes a God-like thing again. When, however, it dwells in flesh, that flesh is not a sepulchre to it as before, but a mansion; here it dwells still, but here it governs, governs over that, and is itself immediately subject to God. That is the thing wherein similitude to God consists, and which must be found in every one that is born of him, a governing, prevailing spiritually, so as that the soul is alone made like itself, and like God; it is made like one and the other all over, like what it once was, and like him from whom it was. But there is in others a spirit too, but ingulfed and swallowed up in a regnant, prevailing, and domineering carnality. A spirit, but employed only in serving this flesh, and the fulfilling the divers lusts thereof, till regenerating grace take place.

Secondly, That which is con-natural, and consequently necessary, this similitude stands in life; divine spiritual vigour. There is life, as it is a spirit, in the natural sense in unregenerate ones too; but in the mean time this is given as the common character, alienated from the life of God. They have no participation of the divine life, Eph. iv. 18. There are two things wherein an apparent difference lies, and may be seen: that is, whether you consider the tendency, or whether you consider the aliment of that life, in the one and in the other way.

i. Whether you consider the tendency hereof. Here is life and vigour in the regenerate man, so there is in the unregenerate too, and (it may be) a great deal more of natural life and vigour: but in the unregenerate where doth it tend? which way is it directed? still in the pursuit of vanity: the operations and actions of life in him are perpetual, everlasting triflings. But consider life now morally, and things morally considered are to be estimated by their end. The end is morality, *habet ratione formæ*, is specifying and distinguishing. Here is life, but which way doth it work? He who to the regenerate is the immediate prime author of life, is the object too. They are "alive to God through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 11. Dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is a great deal of vitality, liveliness, and vigour in an unregenerate man, perhaps. And which way doth it work? Either towards forbidden, or towards mean things. They are either alive to sin, to that which is forbidden; or towards things that are contemptibly mean. Alive to the world, towards which they should be mortified, crucified, and it crucified to them, so as that the world and they should be dead things to one another. When the great regenerating work is wrought, God is the great *terminus* of that life that is then begun. That is a life that is sanctified, is infused, added to a pre-existing thing. In regeneration a man is not in all essentials created anew; then what could be said to Nicodemus's question? "Can a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" No, it is only a holy, sanctified influence that is infused, and doth supervene, as what was grafted upon nature, upon that stock; and so that life becomes a holy life that was but a natural life before. It rested before in all its tendencies in self; in flesh, in this world, in vain or prohibited things, as was said; but now it tends to God, and acts all in a divine sphere, and therefore is called a divine life, the life of God. And so look,

ii. To the aliment of this life, that shows this to be a divine creature that is now produced, that nothing will serve it to live upon but divine things: it must live upon immediate communications from God. And I pray you, as we go along, you will consider with yourselves whether there are any such workings and strivings in you as must have God for your continual support. Are there any constant aspirations towards him? "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." This is the sense of the regenerate soul, I cannot live without God. The same as in Gal. ii. 19. That life that is peculiar to a regenerate person is, that he is through the law dead to the law; in order to a new life springing up in him, that he may live unto God. But how then afterwards is this maintained? Look to the twentieth verse, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And the life I live in the flesh; whilst I live so meanly in this base flesh, I have a life springing and flourishing in me that is maintained continually by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. This is the regenerate life. By its tendencies, and by its aliment, it appears to be a divine thing, and that this is a creature born of God. For which way doth it work? and what supports doth it seek, and is it continually sustained by? This is most agreeable to the former: "for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace," Rom. viii. 6. So long as the soul is under a prevailing carnality, so long is it dead to every thing that is good. But when regenerating grace takes place in it, as it is in that work spiritualized, thence it is consequent, that life springs in it agreeably to such a divine nature as is put into it. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace;" and a most significant adjunct that is; to let us know that this life is not the life of a fury, or that peace is not the peace of a fool; but both these are in conjunction, complicated with one another, peaceful life, and vital peace; a steady principle that works sedately and calmly, and with such regularity towards the objects and in the business that it is to be engaged and taken up about. It is not an ungovernable principle, but as there is life belonging to that sedate and peaceful frame that now takes place in the soul, so there is peace and calmness and tranquillity belonging to that life which springs up in the soul. And this is one part of its likeness unto God, called the life of God, or living unto God, that is part of the work of regeneration in such as are born of God. But then,

Thirdly, There is a divine power that appears and is put forth in such as are born of God. And this also is to be understood accommodately to the sphere of grace into which such a one is translated out of the order of quite natural production. It is raised into a higher sphere. The schools do commonly distinguish, in speaking to this matter, of those things that are of the order of nature, and those that are of the order of grace; speaking of them as two distinct spheres. And according to what was said concerning that life in the one and the other, so must we

speak concerning that power that exerts itself in the one and the other sort of men. It was a Divine power to which the production was owing of the divine nature. "According as this Divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness, wherein there is given us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. A God-resembling nature! These productions carry the divine impress upon them in this respect, that there was an appearance of a divine power in the effect, which is a permanent thing. As we told you the influence did pass away, but it did *relinquere post se opus*, it left a work behind it, wherein are permanent, abiding signatures of a divine hand, that show it to be a thing to be produced by God himself; whereupon you read of a certain power belonging to godliness. And that spirit that is given is said to be a spirit of love and power, and of a sound mind. To us a spirit is given, imparted and communicated. As in that John iii. you read of a Spirit producing, and Spirit produced. The Divine Spirit ingenerated is there called by the name of Spirit. And that spirit that is capable of being given, of abiding, and being permanent, is said to be a spirit of love, power, and a sound mind. That which is born of God in a regenerate person, it is a powerful thing: and therefore is a principle of divine power which animates that form of godliness, so as that it is not a mere spiritless form. "From them that only have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, (practically deny it, understand it not, know no such thing, look after no such thing, as if they did in plain words deny the reality of it, as if it were only a fiction, a fancy,) from such turn away, as a living man would from a putrifying carcass," 2 Tim. iii. 5. There is no society between the living and the dead. A regenerate man can take no pleasure in such conversation; with such as savour of nothing else but carnality and death in all their conversation; from such turn away. The divine principle in them as well as their rule bids them to turn away from them. There is none but impure, putrid breath that comes from them. They smell of a grave, turn away from them.

It is very true indeed, that when the regenerate work takes place, there is very often great complaints of much weakness; the good that I would, that I cannot do; and when I would be doing good, evil is present with me. But there is a great deal of difference between weakness and death, between an ability to do much and a disability to do any thing at all. There is nothing can be done by the unregenerate person in vital and real religion; to every such good work he is reprobate. It is one thing to be impotent and feel, another to be impotent and feel nothing. A carcass doth not complain that it can do nothing, but a sick man doth; he complains of impotence if he be sick only. But if there be a total death, it is impotency, of which there is no complaint. And what there is of power, (as there is always some power always going with the regenerate life and principle,) it is a power of a higher kind and order than that which doth belong to the rest of men, wherein they do something, though but little, yet above all that the unregenerate world can do. They can love God, though it is too weakly, too faintly; they can desire after him, can pant for him. The rest of the world are strangers to such desires, to such designs. The practical workings of the powers that belong to them still terminate in an inferior orb, they never reach God, there is no working of power that way. And therefore it is said of such unregenerate men in common, that they are without strength. It signifies total destitution. They are without any strength of that kind; in that kind they can do nothing at all. When a man shall make an essay upon itself, try himself before his own soul, say to it, Oh! my soul, what canst thou do in a design for God, for heaven, for eternal life? When all a man's natural powers are bound *quoad hoc*, as to this. It is true he hath powers in him belonging to his nature; but they work not at all this way. Why, here is a manifest difference between the regenerate and unregenerate world in this respect. In the regenerate there is a principle of divine power that works in them towards God, and can employ itself about divine things.

Fourthly, This similitude unto God appears in the knowledge which such as are born of him have of divine things. To wit, that gustful knowledge, that practical knowledge, that transmutative knowledge, which will most manifestly appear to be peculiar to them from the rest of men. In the 19th verse of this chapter, where the text lies, "We know that we are of God, (an elliptical expression of being born of God,) and he hath given us an understanding to know him that is true." Are we born of God? Then we have a spiritual eye-sight, a cognitive power, enlightened towards God so as to make us capable of knowing him, and of knowing him with so active and operative a knowledge as to give us a union with him; he hath given an understanding to know him that is true, so as to be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God and eternal life.

Consider the matter reasonably. Do you think that they who are born of God are born blind? Are they born blind towards God, and towards the things of God? Doth he emit from himself any so imperfect, and mean, and maimed a production? "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father," 1 John ii. 13. As soon as they are children, as soon as they are so born, born of God as their Father, there is a disposition of mind to him to receive the knowledge of him. The rest of the world do not like to retain God in their knowledge, they are ignorant of God; not because he cannot be known, that that knowledge should take place in or should centre in them. That knowledge is our notion of divine light, though it hath a further notion, as you may hear hereafter. They have a light darted into the inmost centre of their souls. Indeed a superficial light there is in every unregenerate mind too; some natural notions of God; light that is morally, objectively divine, conversant about God. For I do not think any man can totally abolish and rend off the characters of God from his mind, tear out the ideas. They that have set themselves most industriously to do so have been able to effect nothing therein to satisfy themselves, but so as still there would remain a *formido oppositi*, a dread that he is whom they would fain make themselves believe not to be. Therefore the fool's saying, of what we find Psal. xiv. 1. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," it is not an assertion, but it is a wish. The copulative in the text is wanting, which we supply needlessly. The fool hath said in his heart, No God. Let there be none, oh that there were none! It is not what they put into a proposition, there is none that can obtain so much of themselves, but they have their secret wish, Oh that there were none! So they are willingly ignorant of God. "Alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," Eph. iv. 18. Such a blindness as consists only in a resolution not to see, or in an unwillingness to see. But that knowledge of God, and of divine things which belong to the regenerate state; it is not that superficial knowledge which hovers in the soul and surface of the mind; but it is central, it centres in the soul. "God, that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts." So that this light which is in the heart, must be understood to carry a liking and complacency in it. That as the unregenerate soul doth not like to retain God in its knowledge, the regenerate liketh this knowledge; it is lightsome to them, and carries a pleasant savour with it: whence it comes to be operative and unitive, and unites the soul with the object known. And,

Fifthly, Another signature of God upon this same product, a regenerate soul, is spiritual wisdom, which superadds much, in the ordinary notion of it, unto mere knowledge; for many may know much, that are not wise. But wisdom is the parent of this seed and offspring; therefore, it is said to be justified of its own children. All the unregenerate are fools, "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour," Titus iii. 3, 4, 5, 6. There are not greater instances of folly and madness among them who lie under cure in houses set apart on purpose for that

end, than are generally to be found (though not taken notice of because they are common) in the generality of the unconverted world. They that in so clear light spend their strength for trifles, will not get understanding of what is their best good. They that throw away their souls for nought, that rush upon armed vengeance and are not afraid to perish; they continually run counter to principles, that are secretly conscious of the immortality of the soul, profess to believe there is a heaven and a hell, yet they run away from the one, and run into the other in sight. Greater instances of madness and folly are not conceivable than these.

It is only the regenerate that do become wise. A "spirit of wisdom and revelation is given to them, that they may know the hope of that better calling, and what are the riches of that glorious inheritance which God makes common among his saints," Eph. i. 17, 18. And so, indeed, do the regenerate seed justify that wisdom that is their parent; "Wisdom is justified of her children;" so that it may be known even to the world, that these are the children of it. They are not a generation of fools. See how wisely they do design, and how wisely they pursue their design, to wit, by patient continuance in well doing, seeking for honour, and glory, and immortality, to the actual enjoying of eternal life. No lower things do they design, nor a less suitable course do they take in pursuance of it, than by patient continuance in well doing to seek it. Their design is high and great, and their pursuit apt and suitable. This shows the only wise God is their Parent; they discover of what seed and offspring they are.

It is true, the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light; with reference to the things that their generation can reach, they are wiser—wiser for this world. In reference to worldly matters and designing, they pursue them with more constancy, because they have no other. But the children of light show themselves to be so in their higher and more excellent end, and in their more regular course which they take in order thereunto. But now I add, in the next place,

Sixthly, The great resemblance wherein this creature appears to be a divine production, is the divine holiness stampt upon it, and imparted to it. It is a holy creature. It doth most eminently bear the image of him from whom it is, upon that account. And that makes it a glorious creature, as he himself is glorious in and by his holiness. "Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness," Ex. xv. 11. They are changed into the same image, and thereby become glorious creatures, as he is their glorious Creator and Father. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of God, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Here is this work in its inchoation and in its progress; that work by which souls are at first made God-like creatures; and then promoted and carried on towards a state of maturity, and made ripe for the regions of glory into which they are to be translated at length. This impression of holiness upon them is by the regenerating Spirit which is therefore called the Spirit of holiness, and the Holy Ghost, as you know nothing is to be more frequently noted in the Book of God. This is a creature, born spirit of Spirit; that Spirit of which it is born is the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost, even as such. And therefore, such must this production be. You find (1 Pet. i. 3.) that God is adored upon this account, as having begotten such as are truly appertaining to him upon this special account, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled. Nothing could be more agreeable than that they who are born of him, should inherit from him; that they who are his children should be his heirs also. But having once made mention of them, and of him, upon this relative account, as they are begotten of him, and as he is their great Parent, and the author of this spiritual and new divine being to them. Thereupon it follows, (as you may see in the same chapter,) "As obedient children ye are no longer to fashion yourselves according to your former lusts, in your ignorance; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of holy conversation and godliness." And by the way, you must know that efficacious calling and regeneration is all one, God calls when he creates; when he creates, he regenerates. His calling that which was not to exist and be. And this is but another name for the regenerating work, in which respect any are said to be born of God. Now inasmuch "as he which hath called you (that is as much as to say, as he that hath begotten you, he of whom ye are born) is holy, so be ye also holy in all manner of conversation;" which is but to make your conversation correspond to the very principles of your birth; for you cannot be his offspring if you be not a holy seed. Because he is holy, so you must be supposed to be holy in your very constitution and frame. And therefore see you to it, that you express what is correspondent hereunto in all your walkings, that in all manner of conversation you discover yourselves to be the children of such a Father, holy ones as he is. It is upon this account, that they that are born of him are said to be "children of light." When I told you last time, that according to our notion of light it meaneth divine knowledge, taken in the borrowed and metaphorical sense, (for every one knows what it is taken in the proper and literal sense,) I then hinted, that taken in the metaphorical sense too, it hath a further notion, to wit, to signify holiness as well as knowledge; and indeed knowledge is no further to be called and counted divine light, than as it tends to holiness, and is productive of it; and from thence it comes to be denominated light. It is light, as it terminates in that which is itself so splendid and illustrious a thing, holiness; a bright, a shining, a glorious thing. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works;" that is, not knowledge, that they may hear you talk fine notions; but that they may see your good works. That is the light, the divine peculiar light, that distinguisheth the children of God from another seed. See how light is taken principally in that, 1 Epistle John i. 5, 6. How is the solemnity of a message sent unto the children of men on purpose to make discovery to them of the nature and excellency of God. And, saith the apostle, "This is the message which we have heard, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." The words that follow do plainly enough show what is meant by light and by darkness here. By light is meant purity and holiness, as we cannot conceive any thing more pure and simple than light; and therefore not any thing more expressive of holiness than light. "God is light;" as if he should have said of himself, I would have all to conceive so of me; and therefore I send this message unto men, to instruct them how to form their notions and conceptions of me. I am light, and with me there is no darkness at all. And now, saith the apostle, "If any say they have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, they lie, and do not the truth." If any say they have a participation with God, that they partake and communicate with him in any thing divine, and walk in darkness, they tell a most gross and insolent and absurd lie; "they lie, and do not the truth." It is a practical lying, their practice gives themselves the lie; they do (as it were) proclaim themselves liars. And what is the meaning of all this, but to show that light is holiness. If any say they have fellowship with God, and live wickedly, show themselves to be impure and unholy creatures, that is a great lie, a gross lie, a lie most injurious to God, and no ways advantageous to themselves; they can gain nothing by it, but they wrong him by it infinitely, to make it to be thought as if he were an impure one, like them that pretend to him, to be acquainted with him, to be conversant with him. It is to make a wrong and false representation of him to the world, so that they gain nothing by it but shame retorted into their own faces; for at the same time when they do so, they (as it were) virtually call themselves liars before the world. Because they who know any thing at all of God, know that he cannot be such a one; "He is light, and with him is no darkness at all."

The same notion we have of light as it signifies holiness, in that Eph. v. 8. "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;" speaking of that mighty turn and change wrought upon the soul in the work of regeneration. Ye were darkness in your unregenerate state, now are ye light in the Lord. You not only have it, but are light; as before ye not only had darkness in you, but ye were

darkness, as it were so many lumps and masses of impure, gross, and consistent darkness. But now you are light. Indeed there may be light in an unregenerate mind; but though such a one may be said to have it, he is not said to be it. And that light, though it may have a tendency to some suitable disposition in the heart, yet it prevails not to effect, to bring it about. Though there be a weak tendency thitherward, the thing is not done. And therefore that light doth forfeit its name, and is still called "darkness;" (as our Lord saith;) and you may take his judgment in the case without wavering: "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" The very light that is an unregenerate person, is rather to be called darkness. As in the natural world there is no such thing as *puræ tenebræ*, no pure darkness, no darkness without a mixture of light; but the denomination is taken from that which prevails; otherwise, we should never say it is night, never say it is darkness. We can never say so, as supposing no admixture of light at all; but when darkness prevails, then we say, concerning the region and horizon, it is dark. And so it is with the unregenerate soul: till the Day-spring from on high doth visit, and till the Sun of righteousness arise, that soul is a region of darkness, impure darkness, such a darkness as wherein men work all manner of wickedness, living still under the power and dominion of the prince of darkness: for he governs in that region. And therefore the work of regeneration too is elsewhere expressed by "being translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son," our Lord Jesus Christ; and "out of the power of darkness into his marvellous light;" to signify that we were under other government, other power, before. They that are born of God therefore (as he is the Father of lights) are children of light; that is, holy ones. There is that frame of holiness that invests them, and is put upon them, which carries a lustre, a glory in it, as you have heard, and this must still shine brighter and brighter, in those that are truly righteous, unto the perfect day. And as they gradually approach nearer and nearer the land of light, and thereby are made more and more meet to partake at length of "the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12. But,

Seventhly, Another divine character of those that are born of God, wherein they resemble him, is Truth. He is the God of truth, who is their Parent and Begetter; and they are accordingly the children of truth. Understand me here to mean truth in the moral sense: I speak not now of the truth of propositions, or of the truth of things in their nature, logical or metaphysical truth; but that which is in the spirit and proper sense moral, and that lies in two things; 1. In speaking as we think, and, 2. In doing as we speak: these two make up the notion of moral truth. Herein God is himself a great exemplar and pattern to us; and his image is most eminently conspicuous in all that are born of him in this also. He glories to be called the God of truth. Moses in that dying song of his, Deut. xxxii. 3, 4. when he tells us he will now publish the name of the Lord, he therefore exhorts all to ascribe greatness unto God. "Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." It is the same thing that is spoken of him so often in Scripture under the name of faithfulness: the divine faithfulness, that takes in part of the meaning, though not all of what is carried in the notion of truth; for faithfulness doth particularly refer to the promises he hath made, or the covenants that he hath promulgated and entered into. It is, generally speaking, the same thing with sincerity; that is another comprehensive expression, that takes in the full of what is signified by the name of truth. They that are born of God are true, the children of truth, sincere, upright, without deceit or guile; when they speak, speaking the truth from the heart; when they act, acting according to what they have spoken, especially wherein they have obliged themselves by promise. And that is the proper notion of fidelity, one great branch of this truth. That is a glorious attribute of God, wherein he is pleased frequently to represent his excellency to the children of men; his faithfulness that reacheth to the clouds. Look as high as heaven, look all the way between this earth and up to the heavens, and you have continual instances throughout of the faithfulness of God; all things being conserved through this vast and spacious universe according to the tenor of his word, and those ordinances that he hath settled in this great creation of his. And so the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the substantial, consubstantial image of God, and the brightness of his glory, this is his great character too, the Amen, the faithful and true witness. It is a peculiar name that belongs to the Son of God, "he that is faithful and true." Often he is spoken of by those distinguishing titles; and well they belong to him, as he was the original, substantial image of God. The image of God in the regenerate, those that are born of him, it is true, is much inferior in them, (as we have heard about the generation of the only begotten-Son,) to what it is in him; but it is not contrary, it is a true image, though it be not so perfect an image. It doth not make a false representation of God: it represents him truly, though not so perfectly as in the first and original impression of it in his only eternally begotten-Son; of whom it is said, Isa. xi. 5. "That faithfulness is the girdle of his loins:" they are girt about with truth. And observe, after the same manner, and under the same notion, is that truth which is said to be found in the children of God in this world spoken of too. "Take unto you the whole armour of God, having your loins girt about with truth," Eph. vi. 14. This keeps men steady, keeps them in an equal temper, so as they do not vary from themselves. Being once made like God, then they are to be continually in a uniformity and agreeableness to themselves; their course equal, and the temper of their spirits steady, true, and not apt to swerve or prevaricate this way or that, but like his children. Therefore, inasmuch as he always counts it the glory of his own being, his own nature, that falsehood is incompetent, incompatible, yea, impossible to him, a God "that cannot lie;" so if he hath any children in this world, see how he speaks of them, "They are my people, children that will not lie: therefore he was their Saviour," Isa. lxiii. 8. Put away lying, (saith the apostle,) and let every man speak truth with his neighbour. Put away lying in reference to narrations, and lying reference to promises. It hath the same distinction that oaths are wont to have, which are usually different by those terms, of assertory and promissory. If one should be guilty of perjury, it may be either of these two ways; and if one be guilty of lying, it is one of these two ways too; either by representing a thing otherwise than it is, or by promising to do that which was never intended, and therefore, accordingly is never done. But the one way or the other, there is that which is contrary to sincerity, and to that truth which is the divine glory, the glory of the Divine Being, and wherein he doth exalt himself so infinitely, the God "that cannot lie." And if I have a people in this world, if I have a seed, a race, a progeny, though it cannot be said of them, they are those that cannot lie, (that is the divine prerogative,) yet it may be said of them, they will not lie, "children that will not lie, so he was their Saviour."

It is said concerning the inhabitants of Sion, (which Sion represents, in a borrowed, transferred sense, the church on earth first, and then the church in heaven in the highest sense,) the inhabitants of Sion, (into which none come but by the divine birth, they are come into it whoever are of it,) that they are such as speak the truth from their hearts. And never doth any man come into the forgiving state, till he come into the regenerate state. Then it is that God pardons, when he receives and regenerates. He gives righteousness and the Spirit of his Son both at once. By the one of which he doth one work, by the other of them he doth the other. They are never separated. When any are forgiven, it is a blessed state they come into. Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. But then observe the character of that person that is the subject of forgiveness, he in whose spirit there is "no guile." What? a forgiven man, a regenerate man, one born of God; and a false man, a deceitful man, a guileful, a fraudulent man? He that shall talk at this rate speaketh inconsistencies; he compounds impossible things. A regenerate man, and one made up of falsehood, deceit, and guile; this cannot be. He that is born of the God of truth, there is the image of him as such upon such a man. He is born of the Spirit; and "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth," Eph. v. 9.

And while I urge faithfulness and truth as the character of the regenerate, those that are born of God, give me leave myself to be so far faithful to you as to declare, and testify in the Lord, that whoever they are that can allow themselves in falsehood, insincerity, deceitfulness, and guilefulness any way, let their profession be never so splendid, they do but belie themselves in it. They the children of God, they born of God, they who are the sons of the God of faith, and yet children of falsehood, is a thing that I will not only say is not, but cannot be. It is an impossibility. God hath no such children; they that are born of him, carry this image of him upon them, they are children of truth, sincere and upright; so that if they speak they speak the truth in their hearts, just as they apprehend things to be; if they promise, they promise what they intend to perform. They are as they speak: if they have spoken to their hurt, they will not change. Their word is a sacred thing with them, as God's word is with him.

It is true, indeed, there may be much of this seen in the unregenerate world: truth hath been highly magnified among many of the more refined pagans; and it may have place with many among us, (oh, that it had more,) in whom the divine nature hath no place. But here is the distinction, when men are true to one another for God's sake and for conscience sake; not for reputation's sake, but for God's sake, and because of their devotedness to him, and because they must truly represent him to the world; this is that which is distinguishing; and, indeed, if men be true to one another, and untrue to God, leave out him as the centre in whom they unite, and upon whose account and for whose sake they are true to one another; all their truth to one another is but such a combination as that of several conspirators against their lawful and rightful prince, who may be true to one another, while they are all false to him. But there is no such thing as truth in the right sense, and that which will turn to their true advantage at last in whom it is found, but when God is made the centre, and they are true to God; if they be true to one another, and not true to God, it is a casualty; they have a disposition in their minds to be false to one another if there be occasion; if they be not true to God, if they be not steadfast in his covenant, if they be towards him "as a deceitful bow," (as it is said of Ephraim,) they will not be always true to one another.

And pray let this be deeply considered; supposing that truth have its primary reference to God, I am devoted to him, and I must be true and faithful; this is then the character of them that are born of him; they that are with the Lamb are chosen and faithful and true; and he saith, "Be thou faithful unto the death, and thou shalt receive a crown of life." Here is their character, they must be faithful to him first, and then by consequence to one another in all their dealings, transactions, conversation, and affairs. Take this for an invariable character of an unregenerate person, he is one that can be false, if it will consist with his interest; if it will serve his other purposes, he can allow himself to be so. If he be true, it is (as was said) a contingency. But take this for the character of a regenerate person, he is true to God first; and because he is so, he dares to be false to no man. And it hath been a method observed by some of the wiser and more refined pagans, *Qui deus non timet, non curat homines.* (*Cicero.*) They are liable, one time or another, to prove false to man, that do not fear God. But if the matter do begin there, then is truth a derivation from the Divine nature upon such a one; that as God is the God of truth, from whom it comes, and by whom it is inwrought into man, so the children of God, who are born of him, it may be consistently said of them they are children of truth, they are such as have a reverence for truth; it is with them a venerable thing. I would not speak otherwise than I think, or do otherwise than I have said, notwithstanding the lie might be rewarded with the gain of the world. Truth is with them a sacred thing. They that find no such restraint upon their spirits, have nothing of the divine nature in them. I cannot say or do so or so, say otherwise than I think, do otherwise than I have spoken; I find there is a nature in me that withholds me, that prompts me quite otherwise; I can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, (according to another larger notion of the truth,) I must not, I may not.

This I reckoned of great necessity to be stood upon, fearing that too many may very much misunderstand the notion of religion, while they limit and confine it to the first table only, without letting it have a governing influence upon the affairs that relate to the second. But we are to take both in conjunction. And the error would be the same if men should again confine all their regularity to the rules of the second table too, and think very well of themselves, because they do not transgress those rules. Here is the same danger, and the same fatal error and mistake. But if we will deal safely and righteously, safely for ourselves, and righteously with God, then, I say, we must take the connexion of both together; and take all the rules of duty which belong to the second table, as they have their foundation in the first, to wit, in "the love of God, with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our might, and our neighbour as ourselves." These two make up the law and the prophets, and this is nothing else but the work that is abridged and epitomized in regeneration, when the law of God is written in the heart, and transcribed in the inner man, put into "fleshly tables (as the apostle speaks) not by ink and paper, but by the Spirit of the living God," 2 Corinth. iii. 3. That is it which is done by regeneration; when God doth beget out of an impure apostate world a holy seed, a divine offspring for himself. Whereas their defection and apostacy lay in the violation of the whole entire law of their creation, their regeneration lies in the renewing the impression of it, turning it into a living law within, not into an audible law or a visible law, that they can hear with ears or read with eyes, but a living law, which they feel and relish with their hearts; their hearts being contempered to it. And the Spirit of God makes no maimed impression, it makes the impression entire and full, so as that all the several parts of that law are expressed together. There are characters that signify each several part, and these are but the several lineaments of the new creature, or the new man, portrayed in the soul by the regenerating Spirit of God.

It greatly concerns us when we consider that the Gospel (under the dispensation whereof we live) is the Spirit's instrument in regeneration; and that is part of which we now hear. It is greatly, I say, to be considered, what there is done to this purpose by this Gospel upon our souls. If we never be regenerated by the Gospel, we are very unreasonable to expect that God should use any other methods with us. This is the word of the kingdom into which all they that have a real place in it are regenerated; they are born into it, *in regno nati sumus*, as that moralist speaks upon another account. We are born members of this kingdom; and by what means hath he begotten us again? even hereby, by the word of truth. I beseech you let this be seriously and deeply considered. If there be any such thing as regeneration, that is, if there be any such thing as the raising up a divine offspring to God out of this world, that shall not perish when the rest of the world do, it is by this means that the things is to be done; "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you," 1 Pet. i. 23, 24, 25. Is the Gospel preached to us for this purpose, and is the proper design of it to regenerate at first, and nourish afterwards unto eternal life? For *ex iis nutrimur ex quibus constamur*; the same Gospel is to both. Methinks it should beget in us the most deeply serious and solicitous thoughts imaginable. What is done upon us to this blessed purpose? Hath any thing heretofore been done? Or do I find any thing yet a-doing? Was nothing done the last year? May it be hoped that any thing shall be done this year? Was nothing done the last Lord's day? Is it not yet to be hoped that somewhat may be done to-day? Do I find my spirit altered? There are great previous dispositions in natural productions, before there is a complete product: What disposition do I find? What tendency towards such a

birth? What strivings, what agonies, what pangs are in my soul? Do I reckon I am to be born again, born of God, born from heaven, and never feel it? Can so mighty a change pass upon my soul as amounts to another birth, to a divine birth, and I never be sensible of it? If such a day as this pass with us, and we feel no such thoughts in our spirits, and are unconcerned, what have we to justify our unconcernedness? Wherewith shall we justify our being unconcerned? We can have nothing as a ground on which rationally to justify us, unless we could tear the whole Gospel constitution, unless we could ascertain ourselves there is no such thing as a heaven or hell; for if there be, and there will be so vast differences in the final states of men, certainly those eternal differences must have their foundation here: as men are distinguished by being regenerate and unregenerate, so they will be for heaven or hell. Sure if there be such two distinct states into which men are to be disposed of by the Supreme and Universal Judge, who cannot but do wisely, and righteously, and holily, it cannot be that men should be disposed of into those states promiscuously, whether they are his children or not his children, as if he would make no difference between those that are born of him, and those that are not born of him, but have lived and died in perpetual rebellion against him, full of enmity and perpetual malignity towards him, whereby they testify themselves never to have begotten of him, and that they are not like him; as the following words after the text, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him." If he begat us, we shall be sure to love him. They that have all their days chosen distance from him, is it a supposable thing God should have begotten any according to his own nature, and they should not love him? Not love to converse with him, love not to be in his presence, to open their hearts to him, to unbosom and pour out their souls before him. Hath God begotten any such unnatural children that can live without him all the day, never come near him, never look towards him, never think of him, that know not what belongs to prayer to him? What can men have to preserve peace and quiet in their souls, but the apprehension—that sure there are no such things as heaven and hell, of which we have heard so much?

But who would run the danger of it? If men do but apprehend the possibility, if they have allowed themselves to attend to that light that makes so clear and bright a discovery of another world, and of those distinct states in it; if, I say, they have not allowed themselves to attend to the light, so as thereby to be ascertained in their own hearts, there is as surely a heaven and a hell as there is an earth, (and we have as much reason to be ascertained of the one by believing what is plainly testified, and what the reason of the thing doth evince to us to be true, as we have to be certain of the other from our eye-sight,) then all is vain that we say to them.

But if men would but believe all this, then there can be no more reasonable thing in all the world, than to be full of inquiring thoughts concerning our state, till we arrive to some proportionable certainty concerning it, till we can say, Blessed be God, now I find some of those characters upon me, that speak me one of his children, that spirituality, that life, that power, that knowledge of him and divine things, that wisdom, that holiness, that truth, that will justify me in enumerating myself to the children of God, his family, counting myself among them, and believing that he will count me among them too. But if we find no such characters as these, and yet say we are children of God, we pretend to him, we profess him, that very profession itself is a lie; as is said concerning those false pretenders, Rev. iii. 9. that said, "they were Jews, (that is, Christians,) and were not, but of the synagogue of Satan, they do lie." It is a very fearful thing when even a man's profession is a lie. I call myself a Christian, but it is a lie; one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, but it is a lie; for whosoever believeth this, is born of God; but of this I find nothing in myself

* Preached June 10th, 1694.

SERMON XLVI.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

But now I might add in the next place,

Eighthly, It is a creature endowed with a most generous liberty, that disdains, that cannot be patient of servitude; the sons of God must be free born. This is evident, and hath been elsewhere spoken to and opened. But then,

Ninthly, It is a creature of a very peculiar benignity and goodness. Who would expect it to be otherwise? When you hear of a God-like creature born into this world, what would you look to find it, but a creature made up of goodness? The Spirit is the immediate regenerator, the great agent in this work. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John iii. 6. And we are told, Ephes. v. 9. "That the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." It lies in a universal goodness; here is the product, this is that God-like thing that is now produced. When one is said to be born of God, he is a creature made up of goodness; it is the production of the Holy Ghost, the Divine Spirit; "and the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." And it is added, "righteousness and truth too," which we have spoken of before. Every one that doth righteousness is born of God, and the children of God are children that will not lie, but abhor falsehood. But they are also an offspring of great benignity, of most extensive and diffusive goodness.

I apprehend it may be worth the while to insist upon this, because that there is not another thing wherein the divine nature and likeness are more expressed and held forth in the work of regeneration than in this thing; in no other respect rather or more than this is God said to be the Father of such, or they to be born of God. And, oh! that we may, I for my part speak, and you hear, as those that apprehend the weight and importance of what is now to be spoken; we are in all these things distinguishing the divine seed and offspring from the children of the worst of fathers; and there is no middle state between these two; we must either be born from above or born from beneath; no middle state, speaking of morals: when we speak of naturals we know there can be but one author of nature; but as to morals, two great parents and fathers divide the world, and one of them you must call so. They that are not born of God, his own word concludes concerning them, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do," John viii. 44. But now see wherein a divine production appears and shows itself to be such; here is somewhat begotten, born of God, that appears like God in this, as a thing made up of goodness. And here I shall more distinctly consider,

i. What objects this goodness hath reference to in them. And,

ii. Wherein, or in what exertions, it shows itself towards such objects.

i. What objects it refers to. You must still consider that an imitation of the divine goodness; that supposed all along as that wherein this creature is a God-like creature. It is a God-like creature as it is a most beneficent creature; and it being the goodness of beneficence, or beneficent goodness, that we are to speak to under this head, we shall have somewhat further under another order of heads, to consider what may admit of the same name, but will be of somewhat a different kind. But our present discourse it is to be confined unto a beneficent goodness, and being so, we are not now at this time to consider God as one of the objects that this goodness hath reference to. "My goodness extendeth not to thee," saith the Psalmist, (speaking of such goodness,) Psalm xvi. 2. but, as was said, it being an imitation of the Divine goodness, it must respect such objects as Divine goodness, which is beneficent, doth respect, and they are of two sorts; there is a more general and there is a more special object of the Divine goodness, as hath been largely shown upon another occasion. God's goodness hath,

(i.) A general object. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works;" so diffusive, so flowing is his goodness, the whole earth is full of it. The whole earth—a more surprising instance of the extensiveness of it could not have been given. The whole earth—this stage of wickedness, where constant rebellions against the Majesty of Heaven have been in continued succession from age to age, and from generation to generation acted. The whole earth is full of his goodness; a thing that should not only convince, but amaze that it should be so,

Why, such is the goodness of this creature that is born of God proportionally extensive—"As you have opportunity, do good unto all men," Gal. vi. 10. a goodness that must flow every where, as far as one can, that must diffuse and spread itself to our very uttermost. As you have opportunity—supposing there be an ability and power, then there needs nothing more than opportunity. If there be opportunity, let this goodness exert itself; this shall show you a God-like sort of creatures, born of God, bearing his image; he doth good to all—"as you have opportunity do you do good to all."

When he had it in design to raise up to himself a seed, a new creation in the world, it must be understood it should be such as it was fit for him to own as the peculiar parent of this offspring. What? shall I raise up a new seed to be but like other men? Is this like to God? when he was to do a new thing in the world, to raise up a new sort of people, that they should be but just like the old? Think what men are naturally, and as they grow up from the old stock; every one minds his own things, every one is for himself, cares not what becomes of others, what becomes of this world. But this creature, born of God, is of a large comprehensible spirit, it measures with the universe, not narrow, not clung, not contracted; it bounds (comparatively) private interest, my good is the good of the creation. It is spoken as a most peculiar character of this seed, that when all else do naturally mind their own things, as the apostle speaks concerning Timothy, he doth as naturally mind the things of another, of his neighbour, as if he had no private interest of his own at all. God will have it known that in this second creation of his, this new attempt, when he was to raise up a people, a seed out of a common universal ruin, I will do such a thing in the world as shall make the world look about them, and wonder to behold what new sort of people are sprung up among them. That whereas they have ever himself for his end, himself for his measure, every one being for himself; here is a people that are off from self, a self-denying people, a self-abandoning people, made up of goodness, and making that goodness to flow as far as ever it can; for it is a divine goodness, and they make this goodness disperse like God's, they make it to flow to the uttermost they can.

It must be so, when you consider that this being born of God, and that every such divine birth, doth spring out of believing Jesus to be the Christ: whoso believeth, is born of God, and is a Christian indeed, and honours the Christian name. What, shall the world be Christianized and made nothing the better?—made Christians, and not made good? How unlike God were this!—how mean and low a design would that be! If they be Christians, they must be good men, and so appear born of God: when they are changed, when they become Christians, they become imitators of his goodness: otherwise, how despicable is the performance of the Son of God in this world, when he is to raise up other sons that shall be just as the rest of men are? But then,

(ii.) This goodness it hath a special object too, even as the Divine goodness which it imitates hath—"My goodness extends not to thee"—but to whom then? eminently, principally, to the saints that are in the earth, those excellent ones "in whom is all my delight," Psalm xvi. 3. God takes pleasure in his people; he loveth the righteous; he hath a peculiar love, good will, and kindness towards those that he doth regenerate, that are born of him. And so they that are born of him have a peculiar kindness and good will unto one another, as the text speaks—"Whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth also them that are begotten of him." It cannot but be so, as there is opportunity to do it, good must be done to all, but "especially to those who are of the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10. They that bear the same image, that have the same nature, that spring from the same father, and are of the same seed, this goodness must have a more peculiar reference and tendency to such; and it will argue our not being of his seed, not being children of this Father, if all be alike to him, if his kindness be not distinct, if he be as well pleased with the conversation of the one sort as of the other. But then,

ii. Besides the consideration of the objects of this goodness, we must consider wherein it shows itself, and in what exertions it appears towards its object—why,

(i.) It appears in sundry negatives; and they are not to be overlooked, for there are great appearances of this goodness in them, as you will have cause to judge: As,

[i.] In not being apt to harm others. This is goodness, when there is not an aptness to harm another. What, is it to be thought that this creature, born of God, is a mischievous creature, as it were, born to do mischief? how is that possible? As our Lord was holy, harmless, separate from sinners, so are they to be,—"Be ye harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke," Phil. ii. 15. Mark the connexion, "the sons of God"—and harmful? mischievous?—that cannot be: hath he begot such a sort of creatures into the world to do mischief in it? no; such are not of this seed.

[ii.] Much less are they apt to take pleasure in another's harm: so it is with many other men—it is a pleasant sight to them to behold the mischiefs and misdeeds of others; but it cannot be so with them that are of this seed. Again,

[iii.] This good appears in an inaptness to do evil for evil. They do not think themselves warranted, Because such a one hath done evil to me, therefore I will do evil to him; "not rendering evil for evil," no, by no means, this cannot agree to this seed, this God-like sort of creatures. Again,

[iv.] They are very inapt to be provoked: this sort of creature is not apt to provocations, as is the character 1 Cor. xiii. 5.—"not easily provoked," which is a great imitation of God, who is "slow to anger;" so must they be, and so they habitually are, "swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath."

[v.] Much less can they suffer anger and wrath upon provocation to arise to a fixed hatred; they are quite another sort of men from the men of the world, of whom this is the character, "hateful, and hating one another," Titus iii. 3. This cannot belong to this God-like sort of creature, to have a fixed hate for any one, whosoever they be; no, not the worst enemy in all the world; the contrary is expressly commanded, and is a law in their very natures, even in reference to the very worst enemy. And,

[vi.] They are not habitually vindictive: not only do they not in fact render evil for evil; not only do they abstain from this, or not do this; but much more are they alien from an habitual vindictiveness: to be in the habit of their minds revengeful, oh, this cannot be in this God-like seed! And,

[vii.] Much less is it possible for them to be implacable: this is again the worst sort of mankind, which is described by this character, implacable; that cannot be reconciled; if once there be a grudge it is everlasting, a fixed thing. Oh, this cannot belong to this God-like seed, to be of an irreconcileable spirit, it hath the sum of hell in it, the devil as the parent of it appears in this countenance, nothing more plain; the very show of that countenance discovers who is the father, an implacable spirit, malicious, vindictive, and then implacable. With this are conjunct other things that we might mention: as envy at the good of another: it is the notion of envy to grieve at another's good; as it is an argument of a most diabolical spirit to rejoice at another's hurt, to take complacency in the harm of another; so to grieve at the good one hath in himself, or doth possess and enjoy, such a one is better than I, and that grieves me—or such a one doth more good, or possesseth more good than I, and this I am grieved at; this cannot consist with the divine goodness that appears in this God-begotten creature. But then,

(ii.) This goodness shows itself in positives too, and that more eminently,

[i.] In actual doing good as there is opportunity, and towards both sorts of objects. "To all as there is opportunity, but especially to the household of faith," Gal. vi.

10. So doth this goodness imitate the Divine goodness, he is good and doth good. Never talk of being good if you do no good when there is opportunity. And again,

[ii.] In an habitual propension thereunto, so as to do good with complacency and delight; so this goodness imitates the Divine goodness; he exerciseth loving-kindness in the earth, because he delights therein; so doth the good man do good even with delight, tasting and relishing his own act in what he doth. Oh, how sweet is it to do good! he tastes the relish of it more than the receiver of it doth, incomparably more; according to that motto of our Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." A more blessed thing, a thing that carries more sweet and savour in it. A man finds a blessedness in it; he tastes the fruits of his own doing as a grateful relish. God enables me to do good, to imitate his goodness, and this is refreshing to my soul, this is fruit which, by divine vouchsafement, I am enabled to eat and feed upon; such a one feeds upon his own act, in what he doth in this kind, owing all to grace, as that is called grace that was bestowed on the church of the Macedonians and those Corinthian Christians to whom the apostle did write; he propounds it to them that they might abound, or would labour to excel in the same grace too. Oh, what a pleasant savour hath grace and goodness! Oh, the sweet relishes of it! It would make one wonder indeed to take notice of some expressions of pagans about the pleasure of doing good; in what transports do they sometimes speak of the delights of friendship upon this account, placing all the sweetness of it in the obliging another, so as that it should be impossible for the person obliged to have so pleasant relishes as he that doth oblige. But this must be most peculiarly so in divine goodness; when regeneration makes a good man, produceth a divine creature, his delight is in doing good as God's own is. And hereupon,

[iii.] He doth good for goodness sake; it is its own reward. It is not for vain glory, not for applause, not that he may draw on a good turn afterwards; it is not to gratify such and such, as hoping they may have opportunity afterwards to gratify him; but it is doing good because it is good, for goodness itself's sake. This is simple goodness, pure goodness, incorrupt goodness, unbribed goodness. And,

[iv.] It appears in easiness to forgive. If any do evil to me, it is not a task, it is not a difficulty, it is not a penalty to forgive, but as an act of nature when it comes from a good man, from one born of God; for he hath the nature in him that prompts him thereunto, a divine nature imparted to him, so that it is far easier to forgive than to revenge; revenge indeed must needs have upon a rational account more difficulty with such a one, because that requires contrivance, and waiting for an opportunity, and, it may be, setting many instruments on work to effect it. But goodness flows immediately into this act, it is done of myself; but I must employ many others in revenge, and that may be contriving long; but a man never needs any contrivance to forgive, it is a thing done out of hand, the product of a man's soul: this is the goodness of the children of God, those that are born of God with a nature like his own. The regenerate soul, oh, what enmities does he forgive, and what enemies! How continued, how inveterate, how often exerted with many through the course of their lives, even almost to the last end of them, so as to leave scarce time of repentance and returning! This readiness to forgive, it is sure a great participation of the Divine nature, a direct imitation of God. And then again,

[v.] An aptness to return into amity; for that is a great deal more. There are some that can forgive others, but will never be friends with them any more; an everlasting pique remaining, and they cannot but discover a shyness, a great shyness, shun them, balk them, decline them, and are apt still to think hardly and speak hardly of them upon all occasions. But the divine nature in the regenerate makes a person apt to the renewal of friendship; they can easily fall in again, who are regenerate; if there have been breaches, if there have been strifes, if there have been fallings out, they can presently fall in, because they have been so taught by nature, by that nature which is imparted to them in being born of God.

These are great things, and they are plain things; it is impossible if there be such a seed born of God but it must imitate the Divine goodness, and if it imitate that goodness it must appear in such instances as these—"Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" So we very faintly and defectively render those emphatical words, "will harm you," as if there were a denial of the design or intention or inclination; but it is only a sign of the tense—"who is he that will harm you?" who shall eventually harm you? do that which shall procure you real harm? They shall never (if it be understood aright)—who is that? [you]—not a lump of flesh, but a mind, a spirit, a soul; a being it is true, a body which may be hurt; and yet—*that* not be hurt: "who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers?" What is meant by followers? There is a following by prosecution, as an end; and there is a following by imitation, as a pattern. The word tells us which is meant there; if you be imitators, it shall be in the power of none eventually to do you any harm. Imitators of what? we read of that which is good; it is (of the good) that which is good carries a man's mind presently to apprehend that it is some created goodness that is there spoken of, that we are to follow; but the following being imitation, it is not enough for a man to imitate any created good, be it never so great, never so high, of never so excellent a kind, I must not imitate that good, but be it, have it, possess it. But the expression is of the good, and so there is none good but God, "none good but one, that is God." I will take care for my own divine seed and offspring that I have in this world; I will save them from harm, as far as is needful, so as to bring them safe to the everlasting kingdom that I design them to. And why? and upon what account?—Because they are mine; my image is upon them; they are imitators of the good, they resemble the good, they may call the good, Father.

Objection. But all this while it may be said, What sort of thing are you describing? a thing fled from our world? Why, sir, you do but describe an idea, a chimerical thing; where is there such goodness? or, where is there such a good sort of creatures to be found? Sure we must go as high as the regions of bliss to see such a sort of good people.

Answer. Yes, it was this apprehension that made me the more intent to enlarge upon this head, and spend this discourse upon it. This is looked upon as if it were a thing exiled from the world, fled from the earth. But oh! what a dismal mistake and delusion is it if men will entertain such an imagination, that such goodness is to be found no where but in heaven? No, heaven must be let down into our world, or else it will never have any inhabitants out of it, it prepares its own inhabitants first; they that are born again are born from above, from heaven. There must be a heavenly descent, a descent of the Divine Spirit from above entering the souls of men, forming them, moulding them, renewing them in the spirit of their minds, writing the divine law there; which in reference to the second table of it is all summed up in this, Love thy neighbour as thyself. Harm another? Why, I can no more do it than I can harm myself. Take pleasure in another's harm? I can no more do it than I can take pleasure in my own. Be spiteful towards another? Am I ever spiteful towards myself? Full of malice towards others? Am I ever malicious towards myself? or vindictive or implacable? Regeneration is the writing of the law of God in the heart, impressing the Divine image there; love to God will come into another order of heads. But this love, wherein we imitate his, is love to others. Love to men, if it have place in no inhabitants of this earth, there is no more going from earth to heaven. Heaven must make inhabitants for itself in our world, who are to be so prepared and formed as to be made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light. In this sad degenerate age wherein we live, indeed, such goodness is apprehended too great a rarity to be thought a reality; it is too rare a thing to be taken for a real thing. A very sad case! as indeed conversions are very unfrequent, and it is a fearful thing to consider how long the Gospel may be diffused (which should evangelize the world, and transform men into the Divine likeness) before it proves the savour of life! How generally it is a deadly savour is dismal to think! And proportionably instances of a rege-

nerating work are rare and unfrequent. And the regenerating principle (where it is) is low and languishing, is not conspicuous, doth not shine forth. The contraries to it do show forth themselves in so obvious and frequent appearances, that these evidences and fruits of the divine goodness cannot be seen, as it is a very rare thing for persons to come as returning prodigals, renewed, converted, changed, and transformed, and to pour out their tears and lamentations and self-bemoanings into a Redeemer's bosom, and by him to their heavenly Father, so it is proportionably rare for Christians to make such discoveries of a good spirit towards one another, to pour out complaints and tears and self-bemoanings into one another's bosoms; as if there was no such rule as that, confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another; as if that text were thought to have come into the Bible as a casualty, and stood there for nothing. How rare are instances of any such fruit and exemplification of the divine goodness, as to hear it said by any; Oh! friend, Christian brother, I have offended you, I am grieved for it; it grieves me that I have grieved you! Where is this to be found? These things are just such rarities as the return of wandering sinners into the bosom of God through Christ. A sad token of a departing Divine Spirit! in a great measure sadly departing, almost gone. Religion would otherwise be another thing; the rules and precepts of it would turn into example more frequently.

But this is one thing, and so great a thing, that it ought not to have been passed over. They that are born of God, bear his image even in this thing, beneficent goodness, a goodness of temper, a benignity which speaks them the children of this Father, so as that their temper cannot change by the greatest malignity that they have experienced, and are many times the subjects of from others. It spends itself upon them, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you;" bless them while they curse you, express the greatness of your kindness, love, and concern for them, when they are designing to ruin and undo you. And for what? that ye may be the children of your heavenly Father, that you may appear so, that it may be seen that he hath a divine offspring in this world, Matt. v. 44, 45. He doth good to enemies, otherwise what might become of you? Might it have been said of any of you, Oh, if he did not know how to spare an enemy, nay to oblige an enemy, and conquer an enemy by kindness and goodness, what would become of any of us all.

SERMON XLVII.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

Now, if after all that hath been said upon this account, I would give you an epitome, or a description of one born of God by this peculiar character, I could not more fitly give it then out of that thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. If it should be inquired what sort of thing is this divine birth, whereof we heard so much which is to be sought out in this world? Since we hear of such productions among men, what sort of thing is it? or what sort of person is he whom it will denominate to be born of God? a divine and heaven-born creature? If any should imagine with themselves a divine creature among men, what must he be? Is he one that doth excel in eloquence more than human, even seraphical, angelical itself? Is he one that can speak with the tongue of men and angels? Is this he? or is it a man of profound speculation, that can search and penetrate into all mysteries? Is it one that abounds in knowledge, so as to comprehend (as far as it is possible to humanity) all knowledge? Is it he that hath so extraordinary a faith that he can work you miracles every hour of the day, and remove a thousand mountains with a breath? Is it one that is a greater miracle himself in this world in respect of the extraordinary good works which he can induce himself to do? and the greater miracle, for that he can do them without any principle, bestow all that he hath, all his goods, to feed the poor? Is it one that burns in so hot a zeal for this or that private opinion, this conceit or fancy of his own, that it hath even set his whole soul on fire, and when that is done can be content to sacrifice his body too, and throw that into flames in defence of his opinion? Is it such a one as this, or is that such a thing, a thing born of God? No; it is such a thing as without which all these are mere nothings, will make a man no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, will turn to no account to him in all the world, profit him just nothing, as the apostle there speaks.

Well, what then is it? It is a habit of soul made up of Goodness. It is when a propension to do good is (as it were) all a man's soul. It is such a sort of thing as whereof divine love (which cannot but be from above, from God himself, who is love) is the internal constituent form; which therefore runs out into all suitable exercises, appearances, and demonstrations of itself upon all occasions; it is such a sort of thing as suffereth long, and is kind; the wonder lies in the connexion, suffers long and is kind; that being long (as all good men must expect to be more or less in such an evil world as this is) in a suffering state is not soured thereby, not imbittered, not turned into acrimony; suffers long, and is still kind, full of benignity, patient of any evil done him, but inclined to do none to any other.

It is such a thing that envieth not another man's excellency, nor doth boast his own; envieth not, vaunteth not itself, nor is puffed up: it is such a thing that doth not behave itself unseemly, keeps on a steady course, agreeable uniform course, self-agreeable, and therefore cannot allow itself in that which shall be unseemly, unbecoming, unto a discerning judicious eye: it is such a thing as will suffer a man to have no private interest of his own in opposition to the common interest of the universal Lord of all, or that shall be in a real or actual competition with the rightful good of any other; seeketh not its own things, is not easily provoked, not apt to take offence, not humoursomely captious, so as that none knows how to converse with it or take hold of it: it is such a thing as thinketh no evil, neither thinketh evil of others, nor thinks evil against others; neither apt without cause to take up an ill opinion of another, nor lay designs to do him hurt: it is such a thing as rejoiceth not in iniquity, cannot do so, looks upon the evil of other men with regret, wishes it not to be, and never indulgeth any evil inclination of its own unto private advantage, so as to have the occasion of glorying, this or that I got by an unlawful act, or by pursuing or prosecuting an unjust design and in an undue course, but such a thing as rejoiceth in the truth, in walking uprightly, in a plain and unexceptionable way. It is finally, such a thing as "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This needs no paraphrase; in sum, it is such a thing as carries eternity in its own nature: to wit, when many extraordinary gifts, glittering excellencies, that were designed but to be temporary and to serve some present purpose, shall fail and vanish and fade away; the gift of tongues, of speculative knowledge, miraculous faith, zeal for opinions, and the like; when they shall all fail, this shall never fail, but go into eternity, hath its glory perfected there, as being the greatest of the three things that are here concomitant, faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity.

I thus insist that among Christians such a thing as this may not be lightly thought of, as if it were an indifferent and dispensable matter, about which we did not much need to concern ourselves; which is indeed the reproach of the Christian name, and that than which nothing doth more to obstruct and hinder the diffusion and progress of Christianity in the world.

It must recommend itself by its own goodness, and by telling men to their own sense, that it is a thing that betters the world, and which (so far as it doth obtain and take place) brings men discernibly and tends to bring them into a good and happy state, would make this earth a very heaven might it but generally take place in it. And the consideration of other scriptures makes me think this

* Preached June 17th, 1694.

ought to be the more pressed and insisted upon. I shall turn you to a few (but they are most weighty ones) to our present purpose; and I desire you therefore to weigh them accordingly.

If you look to Gal. v. you will find the contraries to this divine principle strangely matched and sorted; to wit, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, in the 20th and 21st verses; you find them sorted with idolatry, witchcraft, adultery, fornication, heresies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. These do keep company; it seems they are not unfit company, for one another, or to be sorted and put together.

Let me carry you to another epistle of this same apostle, Eph. iv. 30, 31, 32. when he had given that great and tender charge, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption;" he immediately subjoins, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all lying." What is the import of all this, but that these things do most directly tend to grieve that Spirit by which we must be sealed (if ever we be sealed up) to the day of redemption; we grieve him whom we expect to comfort us: that is his peculiar title and style, the Spirit of Grace. The pseudo-christians, or apostates from Christianity, (that the apostle speaks of with so much severity in divers places of that epistle to the Hebrews,) they are such "as crucify to themselves afresh the Son of God, and put him to open shame, and do despite to the Spirit of grace." The most wicked and mischievous thing in all the world, to spite the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of all kindness and love, and goodness and benignity. Wherever this work is done, the regenerating work, wherever any are truly said to be born of God, the Spirit is the immediate agent, they are born of the Spirit; being born of water signifies nothing without this. What do you tell me of mere figurative Christianity, mere symbolical Christianity, the sign without the thing? except, besides the being born of water, there be the being born of the Spirit too, (signified by that water,) you can never enter into the kingdom of God, can never so much as see it: whatsoever tends to spite this Spirit which regenerates, doth certainly very ill agree with the regenerating principle, with the work of regeneration itself; nothing can be more unsuitable to our being born of God, than to cherish and indulge that in himself which spites, and vexeth, and grieves that Spirit which is the immediate agent in his regeneration.

If I should carry, you yet a little further to another of that apostle's epistle's, Col. iii. "Having put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;" then put on "as the elect of God (holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. But above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which also ye are called in one body; and be thankful." It is a rebellion against the divine call by which we are called in one body to indulge ourselves in the contraries to the before-enjoined things, bowels of mercy, kindness, forgiveness, and the like.

And you may see how agreeably the holy men of God speak about these things one to another. Let me but lead you to what we find from another apostle, James iii. 13. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." Here are two opposite principles, that which makes the import of this context the more apparently weighty, and of the greatest importance imaginable: the one is said to be from above, and the other from beneath; the one is therefore the regenerate principle, belonging to the new nature unto this divine birth; and the other fetcheth its parentage from hell, so vastly disagreeing, so directly opposite are these two, not as heaven and earth, but as heaven and hell itself. If you have bitter envyings and strife in your heart, glory not, this wisdom is not from above, (this same genius, this spirit, wisdom and folly being the characters of good men and bad in the ordinary language of Scripture,) this wisdom that is cognate with evil. Envy and strife, and wrath and bitterness, is of no heavenly descent, it descends not from above, it hath no kindred, no alliance with those calm, serene, pure, and peaceful regions. No; quite contrary, but it is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; so that in contests there will not be a perpetual insisting, inflexibly, I am in the right, and I will not yield a hair: and the other as stiff as he, No, I am in the right, and I will yield as little as you. This wisdom is not from above, it is from beneath; that which is from above is easy to be entreated, can tell how to yield when it is opportune, and when the case manifestly requires it. And so the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace (that hath agreeable soil wherein it will take) with them that love peace.

And to bring you back at last to this same apostle from whom we took our text; do but look back to the third chapter of this epistle, how mighty a stress is laid upon this one thing, divine love among Christians as brethren. "We know that we have passed from death to life, in that we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." And I have told you in the beginning of this discourse, that it ought to be remote from us to think him only a brother that is of our own opinion, or persuasion, or party. But as all are brethren upon one common account, so go to the more peculiar and special account, all good men are brethren upon that account, all that bear the same divine image, all that do appear born from above. And he that so loveth not his brother, abideth in death. A killing word it should be unto the contrary principle, that is apt to break forth in continual vexatious and grievous things towards them that are brethren.

And if you look back in the same chapter, to the tenth verse, you see what his theme is: he is distinguishing those that a reborn of God from the rest of the world. "Whosoever is born of God," verse 9. doth not commit sin; doth not industriously set himself to pursue or persist in an evil and forbidden course; doth not make sin, is not a worker of iniquity, that is not his trade, (as many men's callings are denominated from the things they make,) one in whom wickedness is the governing thing, and with whom it is an habitual thing, it runs through his life: but he that is born of God is no sin-maker, is not a worker of iniquity. But how are such distinguished from them that are not such? Why in this the children of God (that are born of God) are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Taking this in as a matter so intimately conjunct with the divine life, wheresoever it is, love to one's brother, the children of God, and the children of the devil, are manifest in this; to wit, that they who are the children of God, they do work righteousness; he that doth not so is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother; he hath that principle in him that speaks him to abide in death the divine life hath not yet obtained, hath not yet a place in him.

Objection. But it may be said, It is impossible that the regenerating Spirit should exist and have being at all where these contraries are to be found?

Answer. In short, it must be said, not where they govern, not where they ordinarily prevail, this divine creature of which I am speaking, this creature born of God, take it in the whole complex of it, it is so Christ-like a thing, that sometimes in Scripture it bears his very name, it is called Christ, "Christ in you the hope of glory," Col i. 27. And if you will consider it in its similitude to Christ, and under that name, (as the Scripture doth warrant us even to place the very name upon this thing,) then where it is amidst these prevailing contraries, (as they may be for the present prevailing, though they do not habitually prevail,) it may be, (as I may say,) Christ crucified, Christ in torture, Christ nailed on the cross, and Christ put to open shame, where such things do appear, break forth, and come in view; nothing is more plain. So that of all things in the world

that can come under common notice, this is what Christians should abhor from, and studiously take care of, that if they will name that worthy name, if they will court to be denominated by it, they may not reproach that name, and throw dishonour and infamy upon him whose name they bear; as if Christianity were to get nothing but ignominy by their being called Christians.

This, therefore, is a further resemblance of God that is to be found in them that are born of him; or that we must expect to be impressed upon the Divine birth; it is a creature (as it were) made up of goodness.

I shall go on with some other that yet remains to be spoken to.

Tenthly, This creature, born of God, it is evidently characterized by its constant aspirings to the perfection of the heavenly state; and therein it hath the image on it of his Divine Parent, whom we are taught to consider and conceive of as having his glorious residence above, as the remanifesting and displaying his glory, and most fully communicating himself; and are taught when we apply to him, to apply to him under that notion, as our Father who is in heaven. And this same divine principle is itself from above; he that is born (ανωθεν) from above, it is he only that can see, can enter into the kingdom of God; this divine principle prompts them to look upwards.

There is therefore a character of heavenliness upon this creature. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (says the apostle Peter,) who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope (hope is there objectively taken, as the next words put in opposition do show) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." This creature, as it is born from heaven, so it is born to heaven, or for heaven. There is a heavenliness imprest upon it, thither it tends, thither it breathes, thither it aspires, flies upwards as the sparks do, it labours to be gathered up into the region of good souls and spirits, where all are perfected together. They that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit do groan, (aspire within themselves,) waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body, that is, waiting for the ultimate perfection of the state they are born for and designed unto. They that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, to wit, all the regenerate, as soon as they come to be regenerate, they have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, then they begin to aspire, as soon as they are born they breathe, and as soon as they breathe they breathe upwards, heavenward. They that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit do groan inwardly, or within themselves, for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body; they aspire for this, and for the state that doth belong to them as sons, and the perfection of it.

It is to be observed that adoption in the theological sense of it may be taken two ways, as in the civil we find that among the Romans there were two sorts of adoptions, or two degrees of it rather. There was first the private adoption, when any did give but some private intimation or signification that he intended to take such a one for his son, but there was afterwards the public or forensic adoption, when the person was adopted by such a one *in foro*, when it was made a public act, and accordingly enrolled in their public records. And so is the complete and consummate glory of the resurrection, of the risen state, here called the adoption. Another verse in that viii. Rom. —19. compared with verse 23. calls it the manifestation of the sons of God, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the time and season for the manifestation of the sons of God; when they shall be owned to be his sons, when it shall be openly declared and known who they are. And this is the state that they who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit do aspire to; so as to be content with nothing beneath, or on this side that; I am born an heir to glory, or the ultimate perfection of that state to which I am born, and whereof by divine designation I am capable, to that I aspire, and can take up with nothing beneath it, nothing short of it. They that continually grovel in the dust of this earth, never think a higher or a nobler thought, are these born of God? are these of the Divine offspring? what an inconsistency and absurdity is that! They that perpetually mind earthly things, have no business in this world but to feed, and dress, and please their flesh, without any thought or concern for the immortal spirit. Are they born of God? No; they that are so born, so well born, have aspirations suitable to the nobility of their birth and parentage, thither they aspire.

But as the things hitherto mentioned are imitations or resemblances of God, in respect of such of his excellencies as are wont to pass under the name or notion of communicable for the most part, I shall name some more that go under the notion more strictly of incommunicable, wherein, though there is not that similitude, yet there is some correspondence; as with respect to the infiniteness of God, I shall give an instance therein. And with respect to his self-sufficiency, under that head I shall only speak to these two things; and though there is not so proper a similitude and likeness, yet there is some correspondence in this Divine birth, as such things as these belonging to the very being of God. As there is,

Eleventhly, An unlimited largeness of spirit; not infiniteness in the positive sense, but a negative sort of infiniteness, of unboundedness, in particular respects that I shall mention to you.

i. There is an unlimitedness, so as not to be confined to this present world. No, saith one that is born of God, it is too little a thing, too scant a thing. One born of God hath thereupon a spirit too big for all this world. As that worthy said, I earnestly protested I would not be put off with such a portion. This earth is too little a thing for me, (saith one that is born of God,) I cannot be confined to it. Nor,

ii. Can such a one be confined to time; his prospect is still larger, he looks forward, "he seeks for honour, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life," Rom. ii. 7. And,

iii. He is not confined in respect of any degrees of truly divine knowledge and grace, he never knows so much in that kind but he still covets to know more; and he never hath so much of grace and the image of God, but he still affects to have more. And,

iv. He is unconfined in respect of service unto him whose he is, unto his Divine Parent. It is his interest, I must serve while I have any being. And he always thinks he hath never done enough if he hath done much, for he reckons himself still under obligation to do more. So it is with one that is born of God. And then,

Twelfthly, He resembles God in his self-sufficiency. This most incommunicable attribute of the Divine Being, to be self-sufficient. One that is born of God hath a subordinate self-sufficiency, to wit, by gracious vouchsafement he hath that in himself, with which he is content; not in exclusion to God, but to inferior things, to the creature. The good man is satisfied from himself, he is constituted a fountain to himself, Prov. xiv. 24. A fountain fed from a higher fountain. God hath made him a living spring within himself, so that he needs not another; doth not need to depend upon this, or that, or the other creature; so as to reckon that if he lose that he is undone. As that wretch cried out, "Ye have taken away my gods, (meaning his idols,) and what have I more?" Every unregenerate person hath some such idol or other, which he reckons his all. Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? When the world is gone, when honour and grandeur are gone, when wealth and riches, this or that pleasant seat gone, Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? No, the regenerate soul hath learnt that doctrine, *ne* . . . . . I do not need to range, to forage; if I can enjoy God at home in my own soul, I have enough. Such a kind of self-sufficiency as that of Jacob, he had all; when Esau compliantly said to him, "I have enough;" but I, saith he, have all. So the apostle, Phil. iv. 18. "I have all, and abound." Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; there is the emphasis. Thou shalt have my presence, God will always render himself present, will never leave them, nor forsake them. Therefore be content with what you have. There is a self-sufficiency belonging to a good man, in exclusion to external good things, he can live without them.

But how will your body live without them? Why, may such a one say, I can live with that, I am such a sort of creature, as can be in the body, and be out of the body; it

is not necessary for me to live in this flesh, my God is my all, and he is pleased to join himself intimately, inwardly to me, and in him I have all. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is nothing in earth that I desire besides thee.

These are so many manifest imitations and resemblances of God that are to be found in this divine creature, who is born of him; and all these things (as you might take notice) do belong to his regenerate, heaven-born soul, as God is his Parent. But (as I told you) the relation is mutual, out of this divine birth results the relation, and relation is mutual between God and them. He is a Father to them, and they children to him; paternity and filiation do enforce one another. Is God a Father to them? Then he must in begetting them, and when they are born of him, impress on them such characters as resemble him. But then are they also his children, then must there be also such things found in them as do answer their relation to God as such; there must be child-like dispositions towards him of whom they are begotten. Several things will come under that head; as the dependance of children, the love of children towards their Father, they love him that begat, there is love immediately towards him that begat them. To pretend to be born of God, and not love him, is of all things the most contradictious, absurd, and self-confuting pretence. Then there is the reverence of him as their Father; honour thy father and mother. If I be a father, where is my honour? There must be obedience to him as their father. Children, obey your parents in the Lord; and be subject to the Father of spirits, that you may live. It is mortal to you not to be subject; to rebel is to die; to disobey is to declare yourself none of the family, it is even to protest against the relation.

The mentioning of all these things, one would think, should occasion many throbbing hearts among us. If God have such a work as this to do in this world, to raise up a divine offspring to himself among men; and if that Gospel which he hath sent is to be the regenerating instrument. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth," Jam. i. 18. that we might be a nobler sort of creatures. A more glorious sort than the rest of the miscreant world are: if the case be so, then while I live under the Gospel, which is appointed on purpose for begetting children to God, what do I find done upon my soul? What impressions are there, wherein I do differ from other men? Is there no difference between the children of God and the children of that other father, that worst of fathers? Is there no difference between heaven and hell? Some do think we can confound and mingle them. Oh, methinks, it should cause great palpitations of heart. What do I find inwrought into my soul, that looks like a divine nature? one born of God, and that may suit and answer the end for which he sent his Son to be a Jesus, and Jesus to be a Christ in this world, by faith to be acknowledged and owned as such? That must be a high and noble design! It challengeth very deep and searching thoughts of heart to be employed about it. What is doing of it in my soul? When we see how little is done, how little effect the Gospel hath, what a miscarrying womb it is for the most part, it may make many a sad misgiving heart among us. What, hath God no children to raise up in our days, and in this part of the world? Hath he done with the converting of souls? begetting and regenerating them in his own image, when they go from day to day, from week to week, and from year to year, with the same unregenerate hearts, just what they were under the ministration which is appointed to minister life and spirit to souls? To remain still the same that one was, what will the issue of this be? What, if time should expire with us now?

SERMON XLVIII.*

1 John v. i.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I SHALL now return to what was the last time only intimated; to wit, That as this being born of God doth not only infer that he is a Father to them, and that, therefore, he must in this work beget such things in them as do resemble him; so herein also they become children to him, and therefore in this work there must be such impressions made in them, and upon their spirits, as are suitable to their relation as children; child-like dispositions towards him as their Father, must be understood to be inwrought; and they are such as these.

First, A high honour and reverence for him. This is suitable to their state as children born of God, that they have high and honourable thoughts of him. If parents, as such, do claim this from their children, most of all the supreme Parent must. It is even, in reference to inferior relatives in this kind and under this denomination, a law of nature. Honour thy father and thy mother. It cannot be supposed, that they that are born of God should be so unnatural children to their Divine and heavenly Parent as not to have him in the highest honour. "If I be a father, where is mine honour?" saith he, Mal. i. 6. It requires to be deeply and sadly considered under what notion are we here: Is it not under the notion of God's children? To pretend ourselves to be such, and not to have the highest veneration and honour for our Divine Parent, is a contradiction and a mockery; it is an interpretative disowning and disclaiming the relation. It is more than saying, it is a signifying practically, that we are none of his children, if we most highly honour him not in our hearts and souls. What must be said in this case by them who go from day to day, and not so much as a thought, least of all a great thought, an adoring and honouring thought, of that God whose children they pretend to be!

Secondly, Another child-like disposition towards him that must be in them that are born of him, is a depending disposition; their hearts being formed to dependance. There is nothing more child-like than to depend upon a parent, the wisdom of a parent, the care and conduct of a parent; this is child-like. Do I say I am born of God? Do I then live a depending life? How is the habit of my soul? Is it formed to dependance if I in every thing contrive for myself without reference to him; never thinking I have a Father above that concerns himself in my affairs? Doth this speak being born of God, or doth it not speak quite contrary? Trusting him with all our concerns, is that which such a relation claims, and doth involve and include in it, which therefore implies, that nothing can be so agreeable and (as it were) connatural unto the spirit of one born of God, as a praying disposition; for that is a depending disposition; if prayer be not a mere form, and nothing else, a piece of empty formality, it must carry dependance in it. It is no prayer wherein there is not dependance and expectation still included. To them that are God's children nothing can be more agreeable than to live a prayerful life, to be much in prayer; this is dependance, this speaks dependance, in every case presently to run to our Father. "I will go and spread all before him: for my love, they are my enemies, but I give myself to prayer, saith the Psalmist," Psal. cix. 4. So we translate it, but there is no more in the Hebrew text, but "I prayer," as if he were all composed of prayer, made up of prayer; let other men take their own courses, (as if he had said,) this is mine, I am for prayer.

It is under this notion that our Saviour directs prayer, (which also in the days of his flesh he so much practised himself,) "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut the door, and pray to thy Father that seeth in secret, and he shall reward thee openly," Matt. vi. 6. What, have I a Father, and shall I not pray to him? A Father in heaven, a heavenly Father, and not pray to him? What a self-contradicting pretence is that in them that say, God is their Father, that they are born of him, but know not what belongs to prayer, and to that dependance upon him which is exprest in prayer! And there are two things, or two heads of things, in reference whereunto this dependance is to have its exercise, to wit, in reference to our present and temporary concernments, and in reference to our future and eternal concernments.

i. In reference to our present and temporary concernments here in this world: The dependance of a child will not allow him to be excessively solicitous; so to torture himself with vexatious cares, to take thought with anxiety

* Preached June 24th, 1691.

what he shall eat, and drink, and put on; for after all these things do the Gentiles seek: to wit, with anxiety, as if the press and weight lay wholly upon themselves, "but your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things," Matt. vi. compared with Luke xii. 36. Why, have you not a Father, and doth he not know what you need? You are to use a prudent care in the way of your duty; but you are not to use a tormenting care, a care that doth no good, but hurt only; a care that cannot add one cubit to your stature. Take heed of such a care, it doth not consist with the relation of children to a heavenly Father. And,

ii. In reference to our eternal concernments. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Do not fear. Are you the children of such a father, and will not your father provide for you as his own children? Yes, he will provide for you after the rate of a kingdom; he will make you communicate in the kingdom, if you depend upon his pleasure. And it is a thing he doth with pleasure. He pleaseth himself in it, in that display and manifestation of his glory, and munificent bounty. I will now declare openly to the world that I own these for my children; then is "the manifestation of the sons of God," (as the expression is Rom. viii. 19.) When all the sons of God are to have an open, complete, formal, magnificent adoption declared before angels and men. This is that which the depending spirit of his children prompts them to expect. And they exercise dependance this way, and exert it upon this account in reference to their eternal concernments. I find there are no great things to be had here in this world, by which God distinguisheth his children from other men; he doth not distinguish them by what they are to possess and enjoy of external good things here; and they are taught to lay no great stress upon any such things; but they are taught to depend upon a kingdom for ample provision hereafter, wherein he will deal with them like a God. And it is their Father's pleasure to give them this kingdom, and upon this they are to depend. It will go well enough with me hereafter, and therefore I am little solicitous what occurs to or befalls me in my present transient state. Again,

Thirdly, Another child-like disposition that must be found in them that are born of God, is love. Love to him as their Father. He is an unnatural monster, and not a child, that doth not love his father and parent: and you see how express the words of this very verse are to this purpose, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him." You see how this is connected with what goes immediately before, taking it for granted, that he that "is born of God, loveth him that begat him." It is not affirmed, but supposed; it is not directly affirmed, as if it needed an affirmation. This being obvious to every one's view and thoughts, that for all them that are born of God, they must love him that begat them, a thing that follows of course. Are you born of God? Then you do love him that begat you.

And whereas we are told, (as you have had sometimes occasion given to take notice, chap. iii. of this epistle,) "by this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." The children of God cannot be manifest in distinction from them that are of another parentage, in any thing more than this, their "loving him that begat." Loving him of whom they are born, as it is a trying, so it is, and ought to be, a satisfying character in them in whom it is found. If they are to judge of their estate, Am I one born of God, yea or no? They may comfortably conclude well concerning this, I find a divine love springing in my soul towards him, my love working Godward, working upward, shows me my descent, of whom I am, who it is that begat me. Oh, the wretched case of those souls that cannot evince their relation to God as their Father, as being born of him, by such a character as this. Do I say God is my Father? Alas, I love him not, I have no love for him. If it be said, as Christ tells the Jews, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you," how must that sink the soul and spirit of that man, in him that pretends to that relation to God as a father, when his own heart testifies that he loves him not!

Love to the most obvious exertions of that love, wherein it discovers and manifests itself. Many might be spoken of, and have been heretofore. I shall only mention these two at present, delight in his converse, and concern for his interest: these are expressions of a child-like love to God as a father.

i. Delight in his converse. Have I any love for him as my father, when I cannot endure to be conversant with him? when I decline his presence, I keep up no intercourse with him, I live a wandering life. Is this like a child of God, one born of God? Oh, sadly consider it, and take it to heart! We hear this day of such trials as these; but we shall know and see a trying day at last, that must put the everlasting differences between those that were born of God, and those that were never born of him And even now, if we do but state a judgment day in our own souls, and erect a tribunal there, what can carry more evidence and convictiveness in it than this, if we would but deal impartially with ourselves. Upon this question, do I love the Divine presence, yea or no? is he my father, and do I flee his presence, and care not to be in it, when I have no pretence of necessity? I cannot pretend a necessity to be out of his presence, as a child may have to be out of his earthly father's presence. He cannot always be there; but the matter admits of no excuse or pretence,—it can be resolved into nothing but disaffection. I may be in the presence of God more, but I will not. You may be with him as soon as you can think a thought. Here is nothing to be said in this case, but an aversion of heart keeps you off from him. And what? is he your father, and will you say you are born of him? How can a man satisfy his mind, his judgment, and conscience, in such inconsistencies and contradictions as these. And,

ii. Concern for his interest. This is child-like love, to be deeply concerned whether he be feared or no, honoured or no, obeyed or no, in those that are indeed his children. How doth such affection as this, a filial affection, child-like love, discover itself? How is it wont to do so? "Horror hath taken hold of me (saith the Psalmist) because of the wicked that forsake thy law. I saw transgressors, and was grieved. Rivers of tears run down my eyes, because of the wicked that transgress thy law." This is a filial sense, the sense of a child, of one born of God; but to feel no regret in a man's spirit, when the contempt of our Father discovers itself openly in the face of the sun, when we are so repeatedly told every day, which way soever we look or listen, our Father hath little interest in the world, he is little regarded, men little concern themselves whether he is pleased or displeased; for men to have hearts as stones, unconcerned, never affected in such cases as these, is this child-like? Doth this carry the signification with it of my being a child of God, born of him? Again,

Fourthly, Another child-like disposition towards God as a father, which must be in them that are born of him, is a subject-spirit, an obediential frame of spirit towards him. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," Eph. vi. 1. A due obedience even to earthly parents, the fathers of our flesh, not of our souls, (they were never capable of producing such a thing in us as an intelligent immortal spirit,) yet this is a right challenged unto them. And what? is it not a right to our celestial Father, to obey him and to be subject to him? to be willingly and of choice under his government, under his rule and law? He that is the parent of our life and being, he that hath given me a being, shall not he give me a law? He that hath given me a spirit, shall not he give me a command to be received from his mouth? Oh, when a man's life is nothing else but rebellion, insolent rebellion, will not such a one be confounded within himself, if he be put to answer the question, Is God your Father? Are you one of his children, or are you not? "How much more (saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 9.) shall we not be subject to the Father of spirits and live?" You have had fathers of your flesh, (saith he,) and they chastised us, and ye gave them reverence; shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? How came I to have a spirit in me, an intelligent immortal spirit, such a sort of being as can think, that is by so noble powers distinguished from a clod, a piece of clay? How came I to have such a being? And if there be a superadded divine principle, so as that God is my father, not only having fashioned my spirit in me, put an im-

mortal understanding spirit in me, but by giving a principle of holiness also in superaddition thereunto; I am under a double obligation to him to own him as my Father; and then shall I not be in subjection to the Father of my spirit? And when life lies upon it, shall we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? What doth that imply, but that it is mortal to disobey, mortal not to be subject? If you will not be subject, ye die for it; every one must be subject or perish. Subjection and perdition, they are the disjunctive, and between them any one may make his choice. Oh, what shall they say, that have never yet had hearts taught to obey, formed to subjection? That despise to be governed, that live after their own will, that contest for the governing power with him that gave them breath, saying in practice, I will not obey, I will live as I list, I will choose my own way and course. This cannot stand with this relation; it cannot stand with being born of God; it cannot stand with the foregoing character last mentioned, love to him, filial love to him; "For this is the love of God, (as you see presently in the context,) that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." This is the sense of a child, one born of God, (as the next words again do import,) "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." Therefore his commandments are not grievous to such a one; he is "born of God," he hath a divine nature in him, that contempers him to the law and commands of God, so that he counts nothing grievous that God commandeth. When every thing that he commands, and the whole state of his government, is looked upon as a grievance; it is a grievance to be under the restraint of his law, that I may not live as I list, that I may not indulge inclinations, covetous inclinations, wrathful inclinations, envious inclinations, vindictive inclinations; no, I cannot be governed, I must have my will. Then you are no child, then you are not born of God. He is not your father, if you will not be ruled; indeed he despiseth that obedience that proceeds not from love. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments;" to obey him placidly and of choice, so that this is the sense of the soul, I had rather obey than not obey. It is a privilege to be under his government. If this be not the sense of the soul, it is the absurdest contradiction imaginable to pretend to be born of God; it is a pretence that overthrows and destroys itself, to say I am born of God, but I will not be ruled by him.

Thus far you have an account what this being born of God imports; and now you have both parts of the text in some measure opened—what it is to believe Jesus to be the Christ, and what it is to be born of God. Now, that which in the next place was proposed to be also spoken to according to the order of discourse, is,

II. The connexion between these two. And I shall upon this head endeavour these two things,

1. To show that there is a connexion, a most firm connexion, between them. And then,

2. To show you the grounds of it.

1. That there is such a connexion; which is but indeed to evince the truth of the assertion which the text contains, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." To evince to you the connexion between these two, is but to evince the truth of the thing asserted, and which is but the same thing in sense with this, that there is no such thing as an unregenerate believer; that with true believing, regeneration is co-extent. Nobody doth justly bear the name of a believer of this, that Jesus is the Christ, of a believer in Christ, but one that is born of God; or that any other believing that Jesus is the Christ, not accompanied with regeneration, goes for nothing, if I should never so peremptorily avow it, that I believe Jesus to be the Christ, and yet am not born of God, it avails me nothing, it signifies nothing to me. I had as good have said nothing, as to say I believe Jesus to be the Christ, if I be not born of God; nothing as to any valuable purpose that can serve. This is that, in the first place, I am to evince to you, that there is such a connexion between these two, and it is to be evinced by sundry considerations, which I shall endeavour to set before you. As,

(1.) Other scriptures do most expressly say the same thing. Look at John i. 12, 13. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Again,

(2.) The relation of sonship to God is connected with this faith, and therefore the participation of that nature in respect whereof we are said to be born of God, must be connected with this faith also; for it is not to be supposed that adoption and regeneration can be separated; whom God adopteth he regenerateth; whosoever believeth, he adopteth. This is the strength of the argument of the consideration that I am now offering to you. Do but look back a little to the 23d and 24th verses of the 2d chapter of this epistle, and you find that it is upon this faith that God owns us as his children, or our having an interest in him as our father doth depend, to wit, "that Jesus is the Christ." Upon our owning of this truth (if it be sincerely and truly owned) this is the consequence, that we now have God for our father; "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son (this is manifestly meant though not expressed in our copies, and therefore you have it subjoined in a different character) hath the Father also." That acknowledgeth the Son—How? That he is the Christ, (as all the drift of the apostle showeth) he hath the Father, he hath God for his father, he hath no father else; but with having an interest in God as his father, his being related to God as his child, is the participation of the divine nature, connected; as you see in the close of the same chapter, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Whereupon it immediately followeth, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." See the series of discourse here; in the latter part of that second chapter, "he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also;" God is his father; he may say, I have a father, a heavenly Father, I have God for my Father; if he acknowledge the Son, believe him to be the Christ, if he sincerely do so. But observe, what the character of such a one must be, he must be able to evince that he is born of God, by doing righteousness as he is righteous; that he hath a holy rectitude inwrought into his spirit, which is become the fixed habit of his soul; otherwise it is an absurd pretence that he is born of God, or that he hath God for his father. And the same thing is as manifest in that mentioned John i. 12, 13. he that receiveth him hath the privilege presently to be called the son of God. But doth that privilege go alone? or, is sonship to God an empty relation? or, hath that relation no foundation? Yes, it hath a foundation—"which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." If they are believers in his name, they are sons, they are called sons, they are presently in that relation. But how in relation? is it a nominal relation only? No; but a real one; founded upon being born of God, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." That is a second consideration to evince this connexion, to wit, that relation goes with this faith, and therefore the participation of a suitable nature must go with this faith also; for adoption and regeneration cannot be separated. And,

(3.) Exemption from condemnation—that hath a certain connexion with the sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ; and therefore regeneration must be certainly connected therewith too. They that have this faith are exempt from condemnation, "shall not come into condemnation, but have passed from death unto life," as our Saviour speaks, John iii. 24. And who are they that are exempt from condemnation? According to the determination we have so positively set down, Rom. viii. 1. "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." You know that there is no being in Christ Jesus, but by believing in him, believing him to be the Christ with such a faith as thereupon drawing the soul into union with him. But do you think that any are exempt from condemnation besides the regenerate, or those that are born of God?

(4.) Title to eternal life and glory is connected with this faith; and therefore regeneration must be connected with it too; "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath everlasting life." He that believeth with this faith hath that life in possession which shall be everlasting life, as one end of the thread that runs into eternity; that life that

admits of no intermission, but hath the beginnings of it already—"he that believeth in me shall never die," as our Saviour saith, John ii. 26. He hath that life in him that shall never expire. But can any think they have an actual title to eternal life, to the glories hereafter to be revealed, who are not sons, who are not born of God? It is an inheritance, and who shall inherit but sons? it is called so many and many times. 1 Pet. i. 3. the apostle solemnly blesseth God for "having begotten them again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The title to this everlasting blessedness and glory and life is connected with this faith; but it is plain it is also connected with sonship to God; and therefore it is equally connected with regeneration, wherein the sonship hath its foundation, for none can be sons that are not born of him.

(5.) Both this faith and regeneration do owe themselves to the same primary sovereign cause, the Divine Spirit, which shows them most strictly to be connected. This faith is from the Holy Ghost, and this new birth is from the Holy Ghost also; there is but one cause of both, they are produced by the agency of one and the same Spirit, and therefore cannot but be connected. This faith, wherever it is, is a God-begotten thing; it is a thing that is of divine descent. When the apostle Peter owns Christ so expressly, Matt. xvi. 16, 17. "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," (which is the faith the text speaks of,) —"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And how plainly are we told, 1 Cor. xii. 3. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, (which is the same thing as to say, he is the Christ; Lord being the known title of the Mediator's office, and of the Messiah in the New Testament, and in many places of the Old,) but by the Holy Ghost." And is not the same Holy Ghost the immediate author of the work of regeneration? "Except a man be born again" of the Spirit, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The same Spirit that begets faith, the same Spirit regenerates the soul into the Divine image and likeness, by which they are born of God. And,

(6.) The same Gospel is the means of the one and the other, of begetting this faith, and of this same divine birth; "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," of the Gospel; and it is the same Gospel, as the means, that souls are regenerate and born again. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," James i. 18. and 1 Pet. i. 23. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," that word "that liveth and abideth for ever"—when all flesh, as the grass, withers; "and this is that word" (saith he) "which by the Gospel is preached unto you." It is by it you are born again, so that there is a connexion too in the secondary or instrumental cause, the Gospel, as well as in the first and most noble cause, the Spirit of God.

(7.) There is a connexion in one and the same effect, as for instance, victory over the world. Every one that is a sincere believer is a victor over this world too. You may see both a little below the text in this same chapter, "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? or, the Christ, which is all one. And then there is,

(8.) A connexion in respect of the end of the one and the other. What any are supposed to be brought to by this faith, it can never be brought about, or the end at which that agency can never be attained, but by intervening regeneration. Why is God so solicitous to have men brought to this faith in this world? Why were there commissions so early given forth for Christianizing the world? "Go, and teach all nations"—and let this be the sum of what is taught—"Repent and believe the Gospel." Why is this faith to be spread through the world? It was certainly for the honour and glory both of the Father and the Son; but shall either be glorified by having in this world only an unregenerate race, professing faith in Christ, but being like other men? More may be said of this hereafter. But, oh! that in the mean time it might be seriously thought of, what we live under the Gospel for, and what we are called unto the profession of the Christian name for. No valuable end can be so much as thought of, that will even be reached without being born of God. I know not what God is doing among us at this day; we hear little, in comparison, of his ways on souls, what is done upon the hearts and spirits of men; we know the Christian name is generally professed among us, we all go under one denomination of Christians; but, oh! think, think again and again, what an unregenerate Christian will come to at last! a Christian, and not born of God! a Christian, and nothing of the divine nature in me, no likeness to God, no filial disposition towards him. If we have a Gospel amongst us that hath made us nothing else but Christians in name, nominal Christians, shall our felicity hereafter be like our Christianity here? Will we be content with that? Will the shadow of heaven serve our turn? That will prove a real hell. And there will be a like reality in our heaven as there is in our Christianity.

SERMON XLIX.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

We shall now go on to show in the next place,

2. What connexion this is; or, to let you see how these two are connected with one another—Believing "Jesus to be the Christ," and being "born of God." And, to any thinking, considering mind, this cannot but be a very desirable thing, when we meet with such a positive affirmation as this, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," to be able to perceive the very juncture, the very point of coincidence, between these two, wherein they do meet, and (as it were) run into one another; for otherwise it may seem strange to have the one of these so expressly affirmed of the other. And one that hath no discerning of this same juncture may say, How should this be, that there should be such an assertion of so great a thing concerning them that do "believe Jesus to be the Christ?" This seems to be one of the easiest things in the world, to believe Jesus to be the Christ. And I would fain know (may such a one say) how it should come to pass, that a man cannot believe Jesus to be the Christ, but he must have so great a thing as this said of him, that he is born of God? Wherein hath the one so much to do with the other, believing Jesus to be the Christ, and being born of God?

That alone which makes the matter seem strange and difficult is, that men generally have too low thoughts of this same faith. This believing, in particular, Jesus to be the Christ, the difference lies here, whether this believing is to be reckoned a divine, or merely a human thing. If it be looked upon as a thing of mere human original, then any body would wonder that upon one's believing Jesus to be the Christ, such a thing as this should be said of him, he is born of God, the greatest thing sure that can be said of a mortal creature! But we are taught to reckon this faith to be a divine thing, of divine original. When the apostle Peter, in the name of the rest of the apostles, professeth this faith, Who am I? saith our Saviour; whom do ye say I am? (when there were various opinions of the people about him at that time, and some said one thing, and some said another;) but "whom do you say that I am?" Why, saith Peter, "thou art Christ the Son of the living God," Matt. xvi. 16. And then in verse 17. our Saviour replies, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona;" thou art a blessed man. Why is he blessed for this? "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." All the question is, whether this faith we have about this thing be a self-sprung faith, or a heaven-sprung faith; if it be self-sprung, then it is

* Preached August 19th, 1694.

only the product of flesh and blood, but flesh and blood cannot reach so high as to produce any such faith as this: neither his own flesh nor blood, which signifies his human nature; nor the same nature as it is among others, by transmitting whereof from one to another this faith would only be a traditional thing; but the product of flesh and blood which cannot reveal such a thing; but if it be such a faith as is immediately from himself, then blessed art thou that so believest; this faith is not from thee or other men, no way from flesh and blood, or human nature, but from my Father which is in heaven.

And then it will cease to be thought a strange thing, that he that so believes should be said to be born of God; for this being born of God, it is but the work of the Divine power working the soul to a conformity to himself, and impressing it with its own image. And this faith it seems is from God too, as well as the great conforming change that then passeth upon the soul when one is brought to believe. And this will make it appear the most reasonable thing in the world, that he that by the Divine power and grace is brought to believe, is born of God; for if it be from God that men are made so to believe, it is not faith from itself, but of God's own ingenerating in my soul. Then it must be considered, if God do this work to make me believe with this faith, he doth it for some end worthy of God, for there is no rational agent but works for an end; and he that is the most perfectly intelligent, the most absolutely perfect and all-comprehending mind, cannot but have the greatest and highest designs in what he doth by his own immediate operation. And therefore he must be understood to have done this work, in making a man thus to believe for an end suitable to himself, worthy of God. And then, I pray, what end worthy of him can be attained, by making a man to believe, if he do not (as it were) now beget him at the same time? He is capable of serving no end, no valuable end, no great end, no end wherein he shall at once be serviceable to God and happy in himself, if God do not regenerate him.

But look to these two things more narrowly, and you will see how they meet, and how close a jointure there is between them, so as the matter will be above dispute. It will make its way into every mind that considers the case duly and aright, "That he that believes Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God;" and in order hereunto, (that this may make its way with more advantage,) you may consider how fully that which is equivalent is said of the same thing. Do but look to chap. iv. of this epistle, and the 15th verse, "Whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Pray consider it; what is this less than that such a man is born of God? The divine fulness is come in upon him. God and he do indwell one another. Whoever he is that confesseth, believingly confesseth, that this "Jesus is the Son of God;" for this is all one as believing Jesus to be the Christ. We find them often put together to signify the same; that if one be expressed, the other is implied, as in that Matt. i. 16. "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God;" and so John vi. 69. "We believe, and are sure that thou art Christ the Son of the living God." And again, John xx. last verse, "These things are written (this book I have now written—this Gospel is written all for this purpose,) that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life through his name." And you may easily apprehend, that confessing this implies the belief of it. No man that is sincere will confess what he doth not believe; "Whosoever doth confess so much that this Jesus is the Son of God, dwelleth in God, and God in him." This is no less a thing than being born of God.

And that we may pursue our scope the more closely, let us but cast our eye upon the two parts that are said to be conjoined. And here I must remind you only of what in general was said about this believing "Jesus to be the Christ;" to wit, that it is not one single and incomplex thing, but that it is complicated of more things than one. As,

(1.) This believing Jesus to be the Christ, it speaks a vivid, strong, heart-assured persuasion, that the thing is true; of the truth of the thing, not as taken up at random, but as taken up from the divine testimony. And because (as it followeth in the same chapter) this is the record that God hath given us of his Son, it is believed that Jesus is the Christ, not because men have told us so; it is received "not as the word of man, but as the word of God," 1 Thess. ii. 13. And in the 10th verse of this chapter, "He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself." And,

(2.) This believing doth by consequence imply the opening of the heart to him, to receive him as such. Believing and receiving him are inseparable; as you see when the same thing is predicated of this same subject, John i. 12. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." Pray, why do they that so believe in his name as to receive him, bear the title of "the sons of God?" He gives them all the privilege to be his sons, why is that? The next words tell you, without which it had been very absurd to have such an appellation. Why are believers so called the sons of God? Is it an empty name and title? No, they are born of God, who were "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Sure they must be his sons that are born of him; but they that believe in him, so as to receive the Son of God, that faith opening its way into their hearts, they are said to be born, not of the will of man, but of God. That heart-assuring persuasion concerning him, presently makes the soul open to him, and entertain him; take him in and appropriate him, and say, "My Lord and my God," so as that he comes to have an indwelling in the soul by that faith.

And then do but consider what was generally said concerning being born of God, that it makes that person of whom this can be truly said, a God-like creature. He is transformed by it into the Divine image and likeness; it is a universal change, and a permanent one passing upon the soul, and continuing in it even to the end, by which he is made a God-like creature; to wit, by which his image is anew impressed and restored in this soul. And these things being finished, let us now consider how inseparable these must needs be, so believing Jesus is the Christ, and being born of God.

Take this faith, as it is such a firm persuasion, a heart-assuring persuasion, upon the authority of God himself, that this Jesus is the Christ, or is his Son. Take it thus, and there are two things in the matter believed, that gave it the advantage to be so powerfully operative in the soul when so believed, as you have heard. Therefore consider distinctly the matter believed, and the nature of this believing it so as it hath been opened to you. The matter believed, when a man believeth this Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God (for believing him to be the Christ involves the belief of his deity, of his divine nature, in respect whereof he is said to be God's own Son, in the most eminent sense, the only-begotten Son of God, which can signify no less than that he is God.) Why, about this you have two things to consider, that will let us see how mighty an advantage such a matter must have, to be thus operative and transforming upon the soul, that it shall be said hereupon truly to be born of God; to wit, first the greatness of the thing itself, and, secondly, the kindness of the design.

[1.] The greatness of the thing, that this Jesus should be the Christ, the Son of God. This Jesus was then lately seen upon the face of this earth, a man like other men. What is believed concerning him? Why, that he is the Christ, the Son of God. That deity did inhabit and dwell in the flesh of this man, here is God manifested in the flesh. How great a thing is this! The serious, vivid belief of it, cannot but affect wonderfully; even in an ordinary way, it cannot but have a mighty aptitude to affect the soul deeply that so believes; for, as was said, to believe this with a divine faith, it is to believe it because God made me believe it, not only by his authority, upon which this faith relies, but by his power, by which this faith is wrought, and then I consider the thing believed accordingly. This Jesus is the Christ; he that appears to other men but as an ordinary man, appears to me the Son of God. The Divine glory shines in him to the eye of my soul. He was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we behel: his glory as the glory of the only-begotten Son o'

the Father, full of grace and truth. To believe this with such a heart-assuring faith and persuasion, is to believe the greatest thing that ever was heard of. That this Son of God should be a man, or that this man, lately seen with eyes in the world, and handled with hands, is the very Son of God, this tends to form the soul to veneration by the very greatness of the thing itself. And God, when he works this mighty work of regeneration upon the soul, he works by means, by apt and suitable means; means suitable to the work to be wrought, and suitable to the subject to be wrought upon. Now what can be so apt a means to work such a transforming work as this upon an intelligent subject, (as the soul of man is,) as to possess it with the belief of such a thing: here I have sent my own Son among you, he that was the brightness of my own glory, and the express image of my own person; I have here wrapt him up in human flesh, and he is in the flesh, to live among you, and at length to die among you, like one of you, as a human creature. What work must this make in the soul of a man, when believed in such a way as you have heard? It disposeth to veneration of that deity inhabiting in human flesh, and so works somewhat naturally upon the soul of a man, (as it is God's way, he doth apply himself to our natural faculties,) to enlighten the mind, to mollify, change, and subdue the will. These are natural powers in us; but these would do nothing to the pleasing of God, or saving us, if not wrought upon by a Divine almighty power. Now God doth sublimate the natural principle by this means.

There is such a thing as natural religiousness, man having been born of God at first, and his soul the very divine offspring, (whereupon God is said to be the father of our spirits,) he hath a natural impression of God upon him. But it governs not but where regeneration takes place; it is a principle laid asleep: but such a faith of this thing brought in upon the soul, revives the principle of a natural religiousness and veneration of God. You see how far the same notion once did work upon a mistake in that Acts xiv. 11. when Paul and Barnabas had wrought miracles upon the impotent man, and preached such admirable divine doctrine that ravished and astonished the souls of their hearers, they immediately cried out, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." And Paul, because he was chief speaker, he is called Mercurius, and Barnabas was called Jupiter, two of the most famous deities. And they are intent upon the business of sacrificing to them as incarnate deities. And the apostles had no small difficulty to withhold them from worshipping, and offering solemn sacrifices to them. So mightily did this mistaken notion operate.

Now, then, that which is the very truth of the thing comes to be believed in good earnest, as certain, concerning this person, this Jesus. Here is God come down in the likeness of a man, he that was in the form of God, found in fashion as a man, made in the likeness of man. Christians must be more stupid than those pagans, if it affect not and make no motion stir in their hearts, so as to say and think, What a wonder is this! What a great thing! That God should have come down in the likeness of man, that we should have had an incarnate God dwelling in this wretched world among us! How amazing a thing is this! This, I say, tends to excite even in the very nature of the thing. And God, when he works, works by suitable means. In the nature of the thing there is a suitableness to excite that natural religion that's in the souls of men, which cannot be totally abolished, but is suppressed. And such a thing as this hath a tendency to awaken it, when the Divine Spirit sets in (as it will set in with truth, when it would not with falsehood) to restore in man that worshipping, adoring disposition towards God.

This is the first and most considerable thing in the work of regeneration, or the new creature; for what are men regenerated for? What makes the necessity of regeneration? It is that men were alienated from God, cut off from God, and therefore must have a nature put into them that would incline them unto God; they were alienated from the divine life. Regeneration is necessary for this, to incline the souls of men to live that life; to live upon God, and to God, and for God. So that when you consider what the work of regeneration is necessary for, you will think that whatsoever will serve that end, to wit, inclining men unto God, fitting them for his communion, and for a state of subordination and absolute devotedness to him, must be the principal aim of regeneration. It is to set the spirits of men right in their disposition and posture towards God, to whom they were strangers, and from whom they were gone off. And you see how the greatness of this thing did very much impress the minds of those pagans; they thought the gods were come down in the likeness of men, and now they are all for worshipping them. But besides the greatness of the thing, which is first to be considered in the matter believed, consider also,

[2.] The kindness of the design. This Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, a deity, inhabiting under this flesh. What is this for? What is the design of it? A great thing, as such tends greatly to affect the heart of a man, if it be not stupified into a stone, a rock, a clod. But when a great thing appears to be in conjunction with the kindest design towards them, this gives it a most important additional advantage, to affect the spirits of men beyond all that can be thought. What should be the meaning of it, that God should come down and put on man, and that this man should be God? Why, it was in order to his being Christ, the Messiah, the Mediator between God and man, as that name imports, so that this was with a particular reference to us, and with some very gracious intendment towards us. And therefore look upon this truth to be believed, this Jesus is the Christ, according to that kind and benign aspect which it hath upon us; and so it tends beyond all that can be thought to work with the greatest efficacy as means, though the thing would never be done without the Divine Spirit upon the spirits of men, to renew and regenerate them, so as that thereupon they should be said to be born of God.

God works upon the nature of man as he is a creature made up of reason and love, according to his natural state; and so he is according to what remainders there are in him of that nature which was first given, and which is still human nature; "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love," Hosea xi. 4. If there be such a thing as love in the nature of man not quite abolished, not quite erased, which by such means as this, that Holy Spirit shall apply itself to a man's spirits to draw him by these cords, that love which he hath in him being taken hold of by the divine love appearing in this design, this gives it advantages to operate with the greatest efficacy that can be thought.

And do but see how this is cleared, by considering that passage I mentioned to you but now in the fourth chapter of this epistle and verse 15. looked upon in reference to what immediately goes before in verse 14. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Now look upon the foregoing words, and you will see which way this works to open the soul unto God, so as that he comes to have an indwelling in that soul, and that soul an indwelling in him. "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." I pray regard this, a mighty stress lies upon it, "We see and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world;" and now it is subjoined, that "whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, dwelleth in him, and he in God." Why? because this can be understood or believed under no other notion than as a Saviour to it, a Saviour to men; he came upon a saving design; this lets him into the soul, "God dwelleth in him, and he in God;" and do you think that this person must not be regenerate? what can it be but that he must be born of God, when God is come into so near a union hereupon? And what lets him in and brings about this union? why, believing that he came as a Saviour into the world, we believe and testify that he came to do the office of a Saviour, and then God dwelleth in us, and we in God. There is that union hereby brought about between God and you, that it is impossible you should not be born of God. A new nature must hereupon come upon you, making you God-like.

And this will most distinctly appear, if we consider what his coming as a Saviour implies: as his name signifies Jesus, Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour is anointed and authorized to this work of saving. When Christ was to come

you know what was said by himself, and by such as gave testimony concerning him, that he "came a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not walk in darkness." That same light that lets us see what he was, lets us see what we were too; the same light that we discover him by, we discover ourselves by. And what have we to discern of ourselves, but that we are a company of lost creatures, impure, guilty wretches, that have inhabited darkness and death? that are cast off from God, have lost all interest in him, and all inclination towards him? darkened creatures, in every faculty and power? under the dominion of sin, and in captivity to Satan, the evil one, the prince of the darkness of this world, and he that hath the power of that death that hath spread itself in all the gloominess and terrors of it over souls? The same light that reveals him, reveals this, and discovers our state, and thereupon shows that he as a Saviour hath to do such things as these.

First, That he is to take away our sins, the great makebate between God and us. This to be believed, when we believe Jesus to be the Christ, that he came and was manifested to take away our sins. In him there being no sin, as in the third chapter of this epistle, verse 5. Oh, how will this transport a soul that hath once had but the convictive light (the thing before supposed) let in upon it to reveal Christ to it, and to reveal it to itself. Take away sin and I am a happy creature indeed, the only thing that ever hurt me, ever did me any harm. This Jesus was manifested for to take away sin; he is a Saviour for that, a Jesus for that, to save his people from their sins. And that is the reason of his name, Matt. i. 21. And,

Secondly, To vindicate us from under the power of the devil; for we were all led captive by him at his will. And this world did lie in the wicked one, that first apostate, that great enemy that hath trained man in to be accomplices with him in a rebellion against heaven; we are led captive by him at his will; and we followed naturally the course of this world, and "the power of the prince of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2, 3. It is Christ's design as a Saviour to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. If a man be apprehensive of this, as when there is such light concerning Christ (there is such light concerning our state too) in this respect, he will be ready to cry out, Oh wretched man that I am! a vassal to the devil! he hath led me captive at his will, could do with me what he would, hath had his will upon me! Oh then to be rescued out of this captivity! Oh blessed Jesus! when Jesus is believed to be the Christ in order to this, it is not strange it should work such a work in the soul of a man. And,

Thirdly, His business, as a Saviour, is to reconcile us to God, to bring about amity and friendship between God and us. When light is let into the soul to see its state, this is the most covetable of all things that can be thought of. There hath been a distance and strangeness and enmity between God and me: he shall be the welcomest in all the world to me that shall make peace, that shall reconcile me to God, that shall procure me his favour, wherein stands my life. Jesus, as a Saviour, is to do this. He came to be a Saviour, a Jesus, with this kind design, and to make this overture to the soul; Come, there is a warfare, and hath been of long continuance between God and you; I will be a reconciler, I will make peace. O blessed Jesus! "blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," upon such an errand as this; for in his favour stands my very life. And,

Fourthly, As a Saviour, his design is to renew the divine image in the soul: Come, thou art a ruined creature, I will repair thy ruins; a degenerate creature, I will make thee a new creature, to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put off the old man which is corrupt, and to put on the new man; I come to new create thee, I come to put a new frame upon thee throughout. And,

Fifthly, He hereupon must have this for his design, to unite us to God, to bring about a union between God and us now that the reconciliation of him to us, and the transformation wrought in us, make us capable of it; his design is to bring things to that pass with us, that our souls shall now run into union with God. Having the Divine stamp put upon them, and a divine nature put into them, they cannot be held off any longer, they must unite with him, for they are become God-like; this is Christ's work as a Saviour, and he makes the soul apprehensive of it, and to apprehend this as the most desirable thing in all the world. As disconformity to God is the most heavy pressure upon the enlightened soul, which he hath in some measure made apprehensive. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." It is he that makes the soul weary of its deformity, and the ugliness that was upon it. Oh what an odious creature am I! what a pressure doth this lay upon me! that now I am become a hateful creature, who once had the divine image upon me, hereupon nothing could ensue but distance between God and me: Well, saith he, I will put an end to all this, I will make up all this matter, I will put a new heart and new spirit into thee, I will write my law in thy heart, I will incline it to God, I will unite it to God; and in so doing, there shall be such a distance and such a strangeness between God and thee no longer. And,

Sixthly, It is by consequence hereupon his work (by doing all this) to perfect the nature of man within itself; gradually and inchoatively now; perfectly and consummately hereafter; he will absolutely perfect it at length. Is he restoring the Divine image in us, making us who were darkness to be light in the Lord, making us, who had the image of hell upon us, to bear the image of God and heaven? Is he not then perfecting our nature by all this? making a new man? "Behold (saith he) I make all things new." That is the Mediator's great undertaking; that is the undertaking of this Jesus, whom we believe to be the Christ. And hereupon,

Seventhly, He brings about (and that is part of his kind design) a continued communion and intercourse between God and us, so that we may live with God every day. Thou shalt not live a wandering creature, and a vagabond, upon the face of this earth, as thou hast done; thou hast now the privilege that thou mayst walk with God every day. Sin is taken away, thou art fetched from under the captivity of the devil, thou art reconciled to God, his image is renewed in thee, thou art re-united to him, thy nature is in a degree perfected, and shall be absolutely perfected; and thereupon thou art to have daily commerce with God in continual communion. This thy kind Saviour is doing for thee: believing this Jesus to be the Christ, thou believest all this, if you understand yourselves in what you profess to believe, and what lies before you as the object of your faith. And then in the last place,

Eighthly, All this in order to his introducing you into the presence of the Divine glory at last, all doth but tend to one end, to make you participants of the "inheritance of the saints in light, and to present you holy and unblamable, without spot and faultiness, before the presence of the Divine glory with exceeding joy," as it is in the latter end of the epistle of Jude. In that conspicuous glory of his, or before his glorious face, where you are to have your abode statedly and everlastingly. This is his design. They believe Jesus to be the Christ, understandingly, as they are made to do so by the Divine Spirit. They believe all this by consequence, this is their notion which they have concerning this Jesus that they believe to be the Christ; he is to do all this for such souls as mine, and upon my soul upon believing in him.

And then the soul, receiving him upon believing all this concerning him, being hereby opened to receive him, he hereby first acquires a right to all gracious communications from him; and then, secondly, hath the actual possession of those communications themselves; for all must be in and through Christ, that Spirit of Christ which is to do all is given upon his account and for his sake, upon being united to him; to wit, the soul is brought into union with him by that Spirit; and upon that union it diffuseth its influences through the soul, and possesses it for God, takes it for his temple. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you?" I Cor. iii. 16. And this cannot but infer then, that there should be such a regenerating work by which a foundation is laid for the truth of this assertion, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." For all these things

to be done by Christ are matter of promise, and all the promises are yea and amen, only in Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. And what are these promises for? we are made partakers of these exceeding great and precious promises, or they are given to us, that by them we might be made partakers of the divine nature which is the very work of regeneration itself, the imparting that divine nature to us; all this promised good is in and by Christ; and believing him to be the Christ, we become entitled to all these promises, and they come of course (we having such a title) to be accomplished and made good.

And thus nothing is more manifest than that which to men might seem strange at first, that it should positively be said, "Whosoever believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God;" it cannot but be so, if you do but observe the coincidency how these two things, believing Jesus to be the Christ, and being born of God, run into one another.

A SERMON,

DIRECTING WHAT WE ARE TO DO AFTER A STRICT INQUIRY,

WHETHER OR NO WE TRULY LOVE GOD.

THE EPISTLE.

You may remember what a solemn awe was upon our congregation lately at the preaching of the ensuing sermon, and that not a few tears dropped at the hearing of it. This engaged some of us to entreat our reverend pastor to give way, that by this publication it might be accommodated to your review. We know it is no more than one single thread that belongs to many other discourses upon the same subject which have preceded, and to others which we hope will follow; but such as by your notes and memories may easily be wrought into the whole piece. It is but a thread, yet a golden one, and may contribute to the service of the tabernacle, as in Exod. xxv. We know it is a great condescension in him to suffer such an imperfect piece to come abroad, but when the reverend dean of C. and other learned persons of the church of England, have denied themselves by suffering such small prints for the general good; we are persuaded, though he gave not a positive judgment for it, he will not dislike that which is for your service, and is intended to go no further. Receive it therefore, read it over and over, and allot some times for the putting in practice the grand examination urged upon us, and do your utmost to persuade all under your roofs and commands to do the like; that that which was preached with so much holy fervour and affection, may beget in us and ours a bright flame of divine love to our good Lord, to whom we commend you, and are

Your affectionate brethren

and servants, &c.

JOHN V. 42.

BUT I KNOW YOU, THAT YE HAVE NOT THE LOVE OF GOD IN YOU.

You have heard several discourses from this scripture, and from another in the same Gospel, that we spoke to alternately with this at several times; "Thou knowest all things, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," ch. xx. 17. And that which after doctrinal explication hath hitherto been insisted on, was an inquiry into the state of our own case in reference hereunto. Are we lovers of God in Christ, or are we not? There have been many things signified to you, by which this case might be discerned; and that which remains, and most naturally follows hereupon, is to direct you what you are to do, supposing your case, upon inquiry, to be this or that. Why such an inquiry, if it hath been attended to at all amongst us; it must have signified somewhat, it must, one would think, have some or other result, and what should we suppose it to result into, but either this, I do not love God, or I do. These are most vastly different cases, it's a trial upon the most important point that could have been discussed among us; and supposing there should be two sorts among us, the effect of it is as if a parting line should be drawn through a congregation, severing the living from the dead; here are so many living, and so many dead souls. Indeed it is a very hard supposition, to suppose that there should be any one in all this assembly that doth not love God; a very hard supposition, I am extremely loth to make such a supposition; I would, as much as in me is, not suppose it. For truly it were a very sad case that we should agree so far as we do in many other things, and not agree in this; that is, that we should agree so many of us to come all and meet together here in one place, agree to worship God together, agree to sing his praises together, to seek his face together, to call upon his name together, to hear his word together, and not agree all to love God together; the God whom we worship, whom we invocate, whose name we bear, and unto whom we all of us pretend. For who is there among us will say, "I have no part in God?" And it were a most lovely thing, a most comely, desireable thing, that all such worshipping assemblies, even this worshipping assembly, at this time, and all times, could still meet together under this one common notion, truly and justly assumed, as so many lovers of God. We are sure there will be an assembly, a general assembly, in which no one that is not a lover of God will be found; an assembly of glorious angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, a numerous, an innumerable assembly, in which not one but a sincere lover of God. What a blessed thing were it, if our assemblies on earth were such! But we cannot speak more gently, than to say there is cause to fear they are not such; it hath been actually otherwise among a people professing the true religion; "They come before thee, and sit before thee as my people, and with their mouth show much love; with their face, or in external appearance and show, (*ore tenus*,) they are lovers of God, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. If such a case hath been actually, it is still possible, and is still too much to be feared to be but too common a case.

But now supposing that there be different cases among us, in reference to these different cases there must be very different deportments, and a very different management of ourselves. This text more naturally leads me to direct what is to be done upon the supposition of the sadder case,

most deplorably sadder, that one is no lover of God; though we must be led on thereto by some things common to both cases.

Therefore that I may proceed by steps, this is requisite in the first place, that is, that we make one judgment of our case or another; that is, that we bring the matter some way to a judgment, not let so great a thing as this hang always in suspense. It's very plain (a little to press this) that,

First, While the case hangs thus in suspense it suspends the proper subsequent duty too that should follow hereupon. What canst thou do that is certainly fit and proper for thy own soul, when thou dost not understand the state of its case? How canst thou guide thy course, or tell which way to apply or turn thyself? And,

Secondly, To press it further, consider that the not bringing, or omitting to bring, this matter to a judgment, if it proceed from indifferency and neglect, speaks the greatest contempt that can be both of God and thine own soul, the greatest that can be; that is, now supposing the question be asked, Dost thou love God? or dost thou not? And thou unconcernedly answerest, I can't tell, I don't know; why, what to be carelessly ignorant whether thou lovest God, or lovest him not, there could not be a more concluding medium against thee, that thou dost not love him. It speaks thee at once to despise both God and thyself; what, to have this matter hang in indifferency through neglect, whether thou lovest God, or lovest him not? It shows that neither regard to God, nor a just value of thyself, makes thee care whether thou art a holy man or a devil. For know, that the loving God, or not loving him, does more distinguish a saint from a devil, than wearing a body or not wearing it can do. A devil, if he did love God, were a saint; a man that doth not love God, he is no other, though he wear a body, than an incarnate devil: It's the want of love to God that makes the devil a devil, makes him what he is.

Secondly, For further direction, take heed of passing a false judgment in this case, a judgment contrary to the truth. For,

First, That's to no purpose, it will avail thee nothing, you can't be advantaged by it, for yours is not the supreme judgment. There will be another and superior judgment to yours, that will control and reverse your false judgment, and make it signify nothing; it is therefore to no purpose. And,

Secondly, It is a great piece of insolency, for it will be to oppose your judgment to his certain and most authorized judgment; who, if this be your case, hath already judged it, and tells you, "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you." It belongs to him by office to judge, "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son," as a little above in this chapter; from what will you depose him? dethrone him? disannul his judgment? condemn him? that you may be righteous? (to borrow that, Job xl. 8.)

Thirdly, It's most absurd, supposing such characters as you have heard do conclude a man in this case, yet to judge himself a lover of God. If against the evidence of such characters a man should pronounce the wrong judgment, it would be the most unreasonable and absurd thing imaginable; for then let us but suppose, how that wrong judgment must lie related to those fore-mentioned characters, that have been given you. Let me remind you of some of them,—he that never put forth the act of love to God, cannot say he hath the principle,—he that is not inclined to do good to others, for the sake of God, 1 John iii. 17.—he that indulges himself in the inconsistent love of this world, 1 John ii. 15.—he that lives not in obedience to his known laws, John xiv. 15. 1 John v. 3. (with many more.) Now if you will pass a judgment of your case, against the evidence of such characters, come forth then, let the matter be brought into clear sight, put your sense into plain words, and this it will be: "I am a lover of God, or I have the love of God in me, though I can't tell that ever I put forth one act of love towards him in all my life; I have the love of God in me, though I never knew what it meant to do good to any for his sake, against the express words of Scripture; How dwelleth the love of God in such a man? I have the love of God in me, though I have constantly indulged myself in that which he maketh an inconsistent love, Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. I have the love of God in me, though I would never allow him to rule me, though I never kept his commandments with a design to please him, and comply with his will. I have the love of God in me, though I never valued his love. I have the love of God in me, though I never cared for his image, for his presence, for his converse, for his interest and honour." I beseech you consider how all this will sound! Can any thing be more absurdly spoken? and shall it be upon such improbabilities, or impossibilities as these, that any man will think it fit to venture his soul? "I'll pawn my soul upon it, I'll run the hazard of my soul upon it, I am a lover of God for all this?" Would you venture any thing else so besides your soul? Would you venture a finger so, an eye so? It's to place the name, where there is nothing of the thing; it's to place the name of the thing upon its contrary. The soul of man can't be in an indifferency towards God, but if there be not love and propension, there is aversion, and that's hatred. And what! is hatred to be called love? If you bear that habitual disposition of soul towards God, to go all the day long with no inclination towards him; no thought of him; no design to please him, to serve him, to glorify him; if this be your habitual temper, and usual course, will you call this love? Shall this contrariety to the love of God be called love to him? You may as well call water fire, or fire water, as so grossly mis-name things here; and therefore again, in the

Third place, that we may advance somewhat, Plainly and positively pass the true judgment. If the characters that you have heard do carry the matter so, come at last plainly and positively to pass the true judgment of your own case, though it be a sad one; and tell your own souls, "Oh! my soul, though I must *sadly* say it, I must say it, all things conclude and make against thee: the love of God is not in thee." Why is it not as good this should be the present issue at your own bar, and at the tribunal of your own conscience, as before God's judgment seat? Why should you not concur and fall in with Christ the authorized Judge, whose judgment is according to truth? Why this is a thing that must be done, the case requires it, and God's express word requires it, 1 Cor. xi. 31. Other previous and preparatory duty plainly enjoined, doth by consequence enjoin it, and requires that it follow, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. What is examination for, but in order to judgment? It must therefore be done, and I shall show how it must be done, and proceed to some further directions.

First, You must do it solemnly. Take yourselves aside at some fit season or another, inspect your own souls, review your life, consider what your wonted frame and your ordinary course has been. And if you find, by such characters as heretofore were given, this is the truth of your case; then let judgment pass upon deliberation: "Oh my soul! thou hast not the love of God in thee, whatsoever thine appearances hitherto have been; and whatsoever thy peace and quiet hath been, thou hast not the love of God in thee:" let it be done with solemnity.

Secondly, Do it in the sight of God, as before him, as under his eye, as under the eye of Christ. That eye that is as a flame of fire, that searches hearts, and tries reins; arraign thyself before him. "Lord, I have here brought before thee a guilty soul, a delinquent soul, a wretched and horrid delinquent, a soul that was breathed into me by thee, an intelligent, understanding soul, a soul that hath love in its nature, but a soul that never loved thee."

Thirdly, Judge thyself before him, as to the *fact*, and as to the *fault*. As to the *fact*: "I have never yet loved thee, O God, I own it to thee; Lord, I accuse, I charge my soul with this before thee, this is the truth of the fact, I have not the love of God in me." And charge thyself with the *fault*. "Oh horrid creature that I am! I was made by thee, and don't love thee; thou didst breathe into me this reasonable immortal spirit, and it doth not love thee; it is thy own offspring, and does not love thee. It can never be blessed in any thing but thee, and it does not love thee." And then hereupon, in the

Fourth place, Join to this *self-judging*, *self-loathing*. That we are to *judge ourselves* is a law laid upon us by the supreme Law-giver, the one Law-giver, that hath power to save, and to destroy. And his word that enjoins it as plainly tells us what must go with it, that this self-judging must

be accompanied with *self-loathing*, Ezek. vi. 9. chap. xx. 43. and xxxvi. 31. Do God that right upon thyself, that thou mayest tell him, Blessed God! I do even hate myself, because I find I have not loved thee; and I cannot but hate myself, and I never will be reconciled to myself, till I find I am reconciled to thee. This is doing justice: doth not the Scripture usually, and familiarly, so represent to us the great turn of the soul to God; when poor sinners become penitents and return, that they are brought to hate themselves, and loathe themselves in their own eyes? And is there any thing that can make a soul so loathsome *in itself*, or ought to make it so loathsome *to itself*, as not to love God, to be destitute of the love of God? And then,

Fifthly, Hereupon too, *pity* thyself, *pity* thy own soul. There is cause to *hate* it, to *loathe* it; and is there no cause to *pity* it; to lament it? Doth not this look like a lamentable case? "Oh! what a soul have I that can love any thing else, that can love trifles, that can love impurities, that can love sin; and can't love God, Christ, the most desirable good of souls. What a soul have I! What a monster in the creation of God, is this soul of mine!" Methinks you should set yourselves, if any of you can find this to be the case, to weep over your own souls. Some may see cause to say, "O my soul, thou hast in thee other valuable things, thou hast understanding in thee, judgment in thee, wit in thee; perhaps learning, considerable acquired endowments in thee; but thou hast not the love of God in thee. I can do many other commendable or useful things, I can discourse plausibly, argue subtlely, I can manage affairs dexterously, but I can't love God. Oh my soul, how great an essential dost thou want to all religion, to all duty, to all felicity! the one thing necessary thou wantest; thou hast every thing but what thou needest more than any thing, more than all things. And oh my soul, what is like at this rate to become of thee? where art thou to have thy eternal abode! to what regions of horror, and darkness, and wo art thou going? what society can be fit for thee? No lover of God! No lover of God! what, but of infernal accursed spirits, that are at utmost distance from him, and to whom no beam of holy vital light shall ever shine to all eternity! Thou, oh my soul, art self-abandoned to the blackness of darkness for ever. Thy doom is in thy breast, thy own bosom; thy no love to God is thy own doom, thy eternal doom; creates thee a present hell, and shows whither thou belongest."

Sixth place, Let a due *fear and solicitude* hereupon be set on work in thee. For consider thyself as one shortly to be arraigned before the supreme tribunal, and then here is the critical, vertical point upon which thy judgment turns; lovers of God, or no lovers of God. All are to be judged in reference to what they were, and did in the body, whether good or evil. As in 2 Cor. ch. v. ver. 10. What wast thou as to this point, while thou wast in the body? For the last judgment regards that former state, what thou didst, and what was thy wont as to this, whilst thou wast in the body. Therefore by the way no hope, after thou art gone out of the body: go out of the body, no lover of God, the departing soul, no lover of God, and this will be found your state at the judgment day. You are not to expect after death a Gospel to be preached, that you may then be reconciled to God. No; but what did you do in the body? According to that you are to be judged. Did you love God in this body while here, yea or no? And this is a trial upon the most fundamental point, for as all the law is comprehended in love, as was formerly hinted, if you be found guilty in this point, that you were no lover of God, totally destitute of the love of God; you were a perpetual underminer of his whole government, of the whole frame of his law, a disloyal creature, rebellious and false to the God that made you, to Jesus Christ that redeemed you by his blood. All disobedience and rebellion is summed up in this one word, *Having been no lover of God*; and won't it make any man's heart to meditate terror, to think of having such a charge as this likely to lie against him in the judgment of that day; that day, when the secrets of all hearts are to be laid open? Every work must be then brought into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or evil, Eccles. xii. 14. And it will be to the confusion of many a one. It may be your no love of God was heretofore a great secret, you had a heart in which was no love of God; but it was a secret, you took not care to have it wrote in your forehead; you conversed with men so plausibly, nobody took you to be no lover of God, to have a heart disaffected to God. But now, out comes the secret, that which you kept for a great secret all your days, out comes the secret; and to have such a secret as this disclosed to that vast assembly, before angels and men! Here was a creature, a reasonable creature, an intelligent soul, that lived upon the Divine bounty and goodness so many years in the world below, and hid a false disloyal heart by a plausible show, and external profession of great devotedness to God, all the time of his abode in that world: Oh! what a fearful thing would it be to have this secret so disclosed! And do you think that all the loyal creatures, that shall be spectators and auditors in the hearing of that great day, will not all conceive a just and a loyal indignation against such a one when convicted of not loving God; convicted of not loving him that gave him breath, him whose he was, to whom he belonged, whose name he bore? What a fearful thing will it be to stand convicted so upon such a point as this! And sure, in the mean time, there is great reason for continual fear, why a man's heart should *meditate terror!* One would even think that all the creation should be continually every moment in arms against him! One would be afraid that every wind that blows, should be a deadly blast to destroy me! that when the sun shines upon me, all its beams should be turned into vindictive flames to execute vengeance upon me! I would fear that even the very stones in the street should fly against me, and every thing that meets me be my death! For what! I have not the love of God in me! What, to go about the streets from day to day with a heart void of the love of God! What a heart have I! *Fear* ought to be exercised in this case; we are bid to fear if we do evil against a human ruler; If thou do that which is evil be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain, Rom. xiii. 4. But if I be *such an evil-doer*, against the supreme Ruler, the Lord of heaven and earth; have I not reason to be afraid? and to think sadly with myself what will the end of this be? But yet I will add, in the

Seventh place, Don't *despair* for all this; God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, as in that, 2 Cor. ch. v. ver. 19. that sin might not be imputed. He is in Christ to reconcile you, to win hearts, to captivate souls to the love of God; for what else is reconciliation on our part? He is in Christ to reconcile, to conquer enmity, to subdue disaffected hearts, to make such souls call and cry, "My Lord, and my God! I have been a stranger to thee, I will through thy grace be so no longer." Therefore don't despair. Despair that ever you should do well without loving God, but don't despair you shall ever be brought to love him, by no means. You have to do with him that is the element of love, the God of love, the fountain of love, the great source of love, the fountain at once both of loveliness and love, whose *nature* is love, and is with his *name* in his Son, who was manifested in the flesh, full of grace and truth, *i. e.* sincerest love. He was incarnate love, love pointed at us, and is upon these terms able to transform all the world into love; the nature of God is love, 1 John iv. 16. and in Christ, he is Emmanuel, God with us, so the divine love hath a direct aspect upon us. Why then apply yourselves to him, turn yourselves towards him, open your souls to him; say to him, "Lord, flow in with all the mighty powers of thine own love upon my soul, thou that canst of stones raise up children and make them the true genuine sons of Abraham; (and there can be no such children without love;) oh dissolve this stone, this stone in my breast, mollify this obdurate heart, turn it into love!" How soon may it be done upon due application. He can quickly do it, draw thee into a love union with himself, so as that thou shouldst come to dwell in love; and dwell in God who is love, and he in thee. Then the foundations are surely laid, for all thy future duty, and for all thy future felicity. Then how pleasantly wilt thou obey, and how blessedly wilt thou enjoy God for ever! But such application must be made through Christ, and for the Spirit; which Spirit is the Spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind; as you have it in that first of the second to Tim. v. 7. But these things I can't now further insist upon.

A SERMON

ON THE THANKSGIVING DAY,

DECEMBER 2, 1697.

TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE THE LORD HAVERSHAM.

I OFFER this discourse my honoured lord to your perusal, in confidence that the subject and design of it will be so far grateful to your lordship, as in some degree to atone for the imperfections of the management. I believe it will not offend against your lordship's very accurate judgment of things, that I have not been so swayed by an authority which hath signified much in our age, as to represent the natural state of man as a state of war; which either must signify man in his original constitution to have been a very ill-natured creature, or must signify his nature to be less ancient than himself. For I cannot doubt, but the author of that maxim would have disdained their way of speaking, who by nature mean vice; or to have been guilty of so pious a thought, that God at first made man any better thing than we find him. I shall the less passionately lament my infelicity, in losing the good opinion of men of that sentiment, if I stand right in your lordship's: not knowing any of your rank and figure in the world, with whom I count it a greater honour to agree in judgment, or do less fear to disagree.

In matters of secular concernment, it becomes me not to profess any judgment at all, besides the public; unto which in things of that nature, every private man's ought to be, and is, professedly resigned. Yet within that compass, notwithstanding the just esteem your lordship hath of the noble endowments, which do then illustriously shine in the military profession when there is a necessity of their being reduced to practice; I apprehend, that otherwise, your lordship hath no more grateful thoughts of war than I, nor more ungrateful of the necessary means of preserving peace. That which is the reproach of human nature, could never originally belong to it; nor can any thing more expose its ignominious depravation, than it should ever be necessary the sword should dispute right; and the longest decide it.

In the matters of religion, which is every man's business, and whose sphere as it is higher must be proportionably wider and more comprehensive, I hope it is your lordship's constant care to add unto clearness and rectitude of thought, the pleasantness of taste; and that you apprehend it to consist, not more in a scheme of notions, than of vital principles; and that your love to it proceeds from hence, that you relish it and feel you live by it. You are hereby fortified against the reproach that attends it from their contempt of it, who are every day assaulting heaven, and would have the war not ended, but only transferred thitherward. That which though some vent, and others admire, as wit, even paganism itself has condemned as foolishness. Your lordship is in no more danger to be altered hereby from your chosen course, than a man in his health and senses, by satyrs, against eating and drinking. I reckon your lordship is so taken up with the great things of religion, as to be less taken with the adventitious things men have thought fit to affix to it. I do not more emulate your lordship in any thing than a disdain of bigotry, nor more honour any thing I discern in you than true catholicism. And recounting what things and persons do truly belong to a church, I believe your lordship is not professedly of a larger church, as counting it too large for you, but too narrow; and that you affect not to be of a self-distinguished party. Nor, besides the opportunity of avowing the just honour and obligations I have to your lordship and your noble consort, with my sincere concern for your hopeful and numerous offspring, did any thing more invite this address to your lordship, than the agreeableness of such your sentiments, to the mind and spirit of,

My most honoured lord,
Your lordship's most justly devoted, and
most faithful, humble servant,
JOHN HOWE.

PSALM XXIX. 1.

THE LORD WILL BLESS HIS PEOPLE WITH PEACE.

You so generally know the occasion of this our solemn assembly at this time, that none can be in doubt concerning the suitableness of this portion of Scripture, for our present consideration. Our business is to celebrate the Divine goodness, in preserving our king abroad, and restoring him home in safety, after he had been the happy instrument of bringing about that peace, which puts a period to a long continued, wasting, and dubious war; under which we, and all Europe, have groaned these divers years. And if we find the favourable workings of Providence to concur and fall in with a divine word, pointing them to God's own people; as this for instance, The Lord will bless his people with peace; *i. e.* he will vouchsafe this blessing to his own people in the fittest season, as it must be understood; this adds so much the more grateful and pleasant relish to the mercy we are this day to acknowledge. It cannot but do so with right minds, unto which nothing is more agreeable than to desire and covet such favour, as God shows to his own people; and to be made glad with his inheritance, (Ps. cvi. 4, 5.) from an apprehension that there must be somewhat very peculiar in such mercy, as God vouchsafes to his own, to a people peculiar and select, severed and set apart for himself from the rest of men 'Tis true indeed that peace, abstractly considered, is

neither the appropriate nor the constant privilege of such a people; they neither alone enjoy it, nor at all times, when it is brought about, even for them, they have other partakers: but yet, such favours of Providence as are of larger extent, and reach to many besides God's own people, have a more peculiar, benign aspect upon them; and are attended, with reference to them; with such consequences, as wherein others, without being made of this people of his, are not sharers with them. Some intimation there is of this in this psalm, which the title speaks, a Psalm of David; and which some think to refer unto the wars managed by him in his time with the Moabites, signified by the wilderness of Kadesh; and the Syrians, signified by the cedars of Lebanon, of whom he speaks in the prophetic style, as if, by the terrible and amazing appearances of God's power against them, they were thunderstruck, like the trees of a forest, or as the hinds that are wont to inhabit amongst them. And so it is concluded, and shut up with this epiphonema in the end of the psalm; The Lord will give strength to his people, the Lord will bless his people with peace, *i. e.* he is in war their strength, and their felicity in peace; in war, he is the author of all that power wherewith they are enabled to oppose and overcome potent enemies; and in peace, he is their truly felicitating good, and makes them by his own vouchsafed presence a truly blessed people.

It is the latter of these, peace, unto which the present occasion confines us. And concerning that, we might in the

1. Place, note from the text, that wheresoever it is brought about, God is the author of it, "God will bless his people with peace." That title which the Scripture gives him, the God of peace, with the many expressions of like import, wherewith it abounds, can leave them in no doubt, concerning the Divine influence and agency in bringing about the grateful intervals of peace, after desolating bloody wars, who have any reverence for the Sacred Oracles. And indeed, to insist upon such a subject as this, in a case so plain, so acknowledged amongst men that believe the Bible, were to reproach the auditory, as if it were made up of sceptics and atheists, or of them that did not believe this world was made by God, or that it was made by him only by some casual stroke and without design; that he cared not for his reasonable, intelligent creatures, when he had made them, what became of them, nor did at all concern himself in their most considerable concernment. I shall not therefore insist upon this, which seems rather slid in, and supposed in the text, or taken for granted; for among a people in visible relation and subjection to God, it had been as great an incongruity industriously to assert and prove such a thing, as it would be, by an elaborate discourse to prove that there is a sun in the firmament unto men that continually partake and enjoy his light and influences; and to whose sense, the vicissitudes and distinctions of day and night by his presence and absence are brought under constant notice every twenty-four hours. I shall therefore, I say, pass on to what appears more directly to be the design of the text, and that seems to be twofold: first, to represent to us in general the great blessing of peace, wherein, when God sees it fit, he is pleased to make his own people partakers with others; secondly, because it is not without design that it is said, he will bless his people with peace, unto whom 'tis plain, this alone is not an appropriate privilege; it seems further designed to intimate, and couch in the concurrence and concomitancy of such things, as, superadded to peace, will make it a complete blessing. "The Lord will bless his people with peace." He will give them peace so and upon such terms, and with such concomitants and consequences, that to them it shall prove a real and a full blessing. These two things, therefore, I intend to insist upon—1. To show you how valuable a good and (in the large and common sense) a blessing peace is, as it stands in opposition to bloody and desolating wars. And then—2. I shall show you, what additions and concomitants are necessary to make it a complete blessing, such as may be appropriate and peculiar to God's own people, and so make use of the whole.

1. I shall show you briefly, how valuable a good peace is in itself, as it stands opposed unto bloody and destructive wars. And this will best be seen, by stating and viewing it in that opposition, and by representing to you somewhat of the horror of war; which we may do, by viewing it in its causes, in itself, and in its dismal consequences, wherewith it is wont to be attended. Consider it in its causes, and they are principally these two, the wickedness of men, and the just vengeance of God thereupon. These two concurring, and falling in together, must be understood to be the causes of so great a calamity among men in this world; and I shall only consider these two in their complication, and not speak to them distinctly and separately. Very plain it is, that war is a mark of the apostacy, and stigmatizes man as fallen from God, in a degenerate revolted state; it is the horrid issue of men's having forsaken God, and of their being abandoned by him to the hurry of their own furious lusts and passions; the natural and the penal effect of their having severed themselves and broke loose from the Divine government. From whence are wars? Are they not from your lusts? Jam. iv. 1.—God most justly punishes men's injustice, not by infusing malignity, which he needs not, into their minds and natures; and which it is impossible he can be the author of, whose very nature itself is goodness, and purity, and love; but having forsaken him, rebelled against him, disclaimed him as their Ruler, refused any longer to be subject to him, they are forsaken of him, and left to take vengeance for it on one another; of which there cannot be a greater instance, than that when controversies do arise between men and men, between nation and nation, kingdom and kingdom, one people and another, it is presently to be decided by a bloody sword. This speaks a monstrous degeneracy in the intellectual world, and from the original rectitude that belongs to the nature of man, which in his primitive state did stand in a temperament of reason and love. That there should be differences about *meum and tuum* in a creature of that constitution is itself a horrid thing; but then that such differences are to be determined only by violence, that presently they must hereupon run into war! Good God! what an indication is this, that reason, wisdom, justice, and love, are fled from this earth! And it speaks rebellion against God in the highest kind, 'tis a subversion of the most fundamental law of his kingdom over the intelligent world; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy might, and thy neighbour as thyself.

'Tis impossible there should be any such thing as war in the world, but by the violation of this most fundamental divine law, the principal and most important thing that this government does as it were consist in over reasonable creatures, their loving him above all, and one another as themselves. This law observed must make this earth another heaven; this law violated and broken, makes it another hell. Men being fallen from God, and having lost their acquaintance with him, and all relish of divine things, think to repair their loss out of this sensible world, whereof no man thinks he hath enough; desire of more blinds their eyes, that they cannot judge of right and wrong. Hence every man's cause is right in his own eyes; appetite is the only measure they judge by, and power (whatsoever of it any one can grasp) the instrument by which they execute their perverse judgment. A dismal spectacle and subject of contemplation to the inhabitants of the purer and more peaceful regions! To behold a divine offspring, the sons of God, now transformed into sons of the earth, and tearing in pieces one another, for what some possess and others covet! Yea, and to a calm uninterested spectator on our own globe, this can be no grateful prospect, to view the history of all times, and nations, and take notice how full it is of such tragedy: countries from age to age made Aceldamas, fields of blood, on this account of extending or confining empire and dominion; of invading another's or defending one's own: but hereupon it is not strange when a world of intelligent, reasonable creatures are thus gone off from God, and in rebellion against him in the most fundamental part of his government, that he suffers them to be the executioners of his just wrath upon one another. And if we thus look upon war, first, in this its complicated causes, it is the opprobrium, the reproach of human nature, of intelligent reasonable creatures. But next look upon it in itself, and what is it but the destruction of human lives, of creatures made after the image of God? of whom he has so high a value, and whose lives, even for that very

reason, he is pleased to fence and secure by a severe law; Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man. But here is a formed design of destroying human lives by multitudes, lives of creatures bearing the image of God. And by how much the more necessary this is in many cases, so much the more grievous and calamitous a thing it is, that when to cut off and destroy by multitudes so precious things as human lives is tragical and horrid, not to do it is so much worse! Yea, that war itself is become an art, and that the valour and skill which belong to it are laudable excellencies, is all aggravation of the sadness of this case.

And if we do consider the consequences and effects which do ensue upon such war, how full of horror and frightfulness are they! and those most of all, that are least of all thought on, and that lie most out of view; for besides that property is gone, and no man knows what to call his own, laws lose their force, magistrates their authority and reverence, civil government is disobeyed and despised, common order is violated and turned into confusion, families torn in pieces, countries laid waste and desolate, towns and cities sacked, ravaged, and made ruinous heaps; besides all this (I say) the sacred rites and mysteries of religion are neglected and profaned, its holy solemnities interrupted, worshipping assemblies are broken up. Men have little opportunity left them to mind their great concerns with God, and for another world; care for immortal souls, when it is most necessary, is thrown out of doors, and reasonable creatures, that should be employed in adoring and worshipping their great Creator, the God of their lives, are employed in designing the mutual destruction of one another's lives; and it may be that is least considered which carries the most of horror in it, that multitudes are hurried down to perdition, neither dreaded by themselves, nor apprehended by the destroyer; souls are passing in shoals into eternity, they not considering it who are sent, nor they that sent them! And what sport does this make for devils, those envious apostate spirits, that first drew men into a like apostacy; that when God had given this earth to the children of men, assigning to themselves a worse abode amidst infernal darkness and flames, they should be tearing one another in pieces about this their portion under the sun, making God's bounty to them the occasion of their doing all manner of violence to one another! That the prince of the apostacy, the usurping God of this world, should have the opportunity of beholding man, sometime by divine grant the lord of it, now its slave and his captive by it! Led by him at his will into whatsoever is most repugnant to the will and the very nature of his Maker. That whereas he was at first made after God's own image, a God-like creature resembling his Maker, especially in spirituality and love; he now more resembles in sensuality beasts, and in malignity devils, and both by an inordinate love of this world; the friendship whereof, and a mind carnalized by it, is enmity against God, Jam. iv. 4.—Rom. viii. 7.) and whereof also, because every man thinks his own share too little, he becomes any one's enemy that hath more of it than himself.

And thus have devils the pleasure of beholding men, by this very gift and expression of God's love and kindness to them transformed into enmity, and hatred of himself, and one another; forsaken of him, and destroying each other, and hastening once more into their horrid society, that as they were accomplices with them in their first rebellion, they may be partakers and associates with them in wo and torment. The most dismal part of the story, is that which lies most out of sight. Now let all this be considered and put together, and surely peace is a valuable thing, it speaks man in some degree returned to himself, and in a right mind, when he can agree and be content to let another live quiet and unmolested by him, one man another man, and one nation another nation. Thus far does peace appear a blessing apart and by itself, a valuable good, and according to the common notion and estimate, it may be called a blessing wherewith God blesses his people in common with others. But we are further to consider,

2. What things are requisite to make this a real and a complete blessing, capable of being appropriated unto God's own peculiar people; which seems also to be intended here. The Lord will bless his people with peace. In speaking to this I shall do these two things. 1. Mention the requisites themselves—1. Show their requisiteness, or show what is requisite to make eternal peace a real and peculiar blessing. And then show you upon what account the addition and concomitancy of such things are requisite.

1. I shall show you the things that are requisite.

1. Such peace, as we have hitherto been speaking of, is then truly a blessing, when there is, in conjunction with it, a very copious effusion of the Spirit of God; in such a concomitancy, peace will make a people a blessed people. When, after such a calamitous dispensation was over and at an end, as we read of Ezek. xxxix. wherein, ver. 23. God is said to hide his face, and many of his people were carried into captivity, and many fell by the sword; it comes at length to this, he will no more hide his face, or cover it with so ireful and gloomy aspects and appearances that it cannot be comfortably beheld. 'Tis for this very reason, because he pours forth his Spirit upon the whole house of Israel, as it is in ver. 29. of that chapter. Pouring forth signifies a copious communication; and if the Spirit of God be copiously communicated, the best of blessings are in great abundance contained in it, which will infer, or countervail whatsoever is valuable or needful besides, to make the state of such a people a blessed state.

2. It will be so, when the Gospel of peace has its free course, and a large spread in the world. When, in conjunction with beating of swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks, the law goes forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and nations shall say, Come let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his statutes; as in that of Micah, iv. 2, 3. And,

3. When, according to the dictate of Divine wisdom, kings do reign (as Prov. viii. 15.) and princes decree justice; when God's people have judges, as at the first, counsellors as at the beginning, Isa. i. 26. able men, men of truth, fearing God and hating covetousness, Exod. xviii. 21. When he is pleased to set kings on the throne, that scatter the wicked with their eyes, and so to establish the throne in righteousness; when there is a design, driven by those that bear the civil sword, the sword of justice, to be a terror to evil-doers, but a praise to them that do well; so as it may be said upon this account, they are the ministers of God for good, whom he has been pleased to set in such stations.

4. When God gives pastors after his own heart that are able, and do make it their business, to feed his people with knowledge and understanding. When he inspirits such to cry mightily, to warn men off from sin, when watchmen, set over his people, are faithful in the business of their station, at once both to save their people and themselves, from having their blood required at the hands of either; this will make a peaceful state, a happy state; it will contribute a great deal towards it. And again when herenpon, in the

5. Place, wickedness languishes, the lusts of men droop and wither. There is some visible restraint, if there be not a universal mortification of such fruits of the flesh, as those that are spoken of Gal. v. 19. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like, that are inconsistent with a share in the inheritance of the kingdom of God, as it after follows. This does much to the making a peaceful state of things a blessed state; it takes away much of the occasion of further controversy between God and such a people. But,

6. When there is a very great diffusion of a holy new nature, which carries the matter higher, and is a great addition, though in certain conjunction with the former; as it is when the lusts and works of the flesh do cease to be reigning and rampant among them who live under the Gospel, through the victorious and more powerful operation of the Spirit of grace breathing in it. For then by the influence of the same Spirit, not only such vicious inclinations are plucked up by the roots, as certainly withstand a people's felicity; but such positive principles are implanted, as tend to promote it. Yet since this conjunction is not constant, but such insolences of wickedness, as more directly tend to make a people miserable, may be repressed by inferior causes. I therefore more expressly add, that then peace may be reckoned a certain and a full blessing, when

with it we behold a divine offspring continually rising up, of men appearing to be born of God, and to have received a God-like nature, apt to do good, and become blessings to the world. When there is a rising generation of such, not proselyted to this or that party, but to real substantial godliness and Christianity. When multitudes are thus turned unto the Lord, when there are numerous conversions, a new creation is springing up in visible and multiplied instances, so as that holiness comes to be both an extensive and illustrious thing. When multitudes come to give reputation to serious religion, when it is no longer a reproach to be a visible fearer of God, because generally men are so. When it is looked upon as no fashionable thing to be a despiser of God and heaven, and to breathe out contempt of the Divine power, that gave us breath. And,

7. When, hereupon, the divine government obtains and takes place in the minds and consciences of men, when his authority is owned with reverential submission. Then God does bless a people, when his fear spreads far and near; God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him; as in that Ps. lxvii. the latter end. And again,

8. When there is a manifest power and prevalency of divine love amongst men, that bear the same name of Christians, when that peace of God rules in their hearts, unto which they are all called in one body. When they observedly keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, when they have peace one towards another so as that it may be seen that they are all the sons of peace, the children of the same Father who has conveyed it into them, as part of that divine nature which he communicates to the regenerate seed; when there is a natural propensity to one another, that they can no more violate and tear that vital bond of love and peace that is among them than they can endure to tear their own flesh, or pluck out their own eyes. When peace among Christians appears to be a connatural thing, not the product of convenience and prudential considerations only, but a nature which none can more endure to counteract than to offer violence to themselves; a thing which nature admits not, whose laws never allow it to act against itself. And,

Lastly, When, upon all this, God appears to be reconciled unto such a people; for in his favour is life. When all these things do concur, as so many indications of his being at peace with them, *i. e.* that he has entirely forgiven them all former offences; that their sins and iniquities he remembers no more; and these concur with such things as partly make, and partly argue them, the objects of his delight, that he has written his law in their hearts, he has put his Spirit into them, he has made them a company of God-like creatures like himself, whose very nature is love; they are his living resemblances in that very respect, expressing herein his virtues, who has called them out of darkness into his own glorious and marvellous light. Hereupon such a people may reckon themselves secure of God's own presence, he is in the midst of them, and his glory ceases to hover, becomes with them a fixed thing, settles its station, as not about to discontinue or remove; their land may now be called, The land of Emmanuel, and bears the inscription, God with us. The tabernacle of God is with them, and he is resolved to dwell with them, and be their God, and avow them before all the world for his peculiar people. After the many things that do concur together, in an inferior kind, as the concomitants of a merely external peace, as that their sons grow up as plants, their daughters as so many polished corner-stones, that join together the walls of a palace, that their garners be full, their sheep numerous, their oxen strong, and that there be no complaining in their streets; after all these things, it is subjoined, Yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord. All the fore-mentioned things alone, will never make a blessing worthy of a people peculiar to God. But when it can be said that the Lord is their God, they are a happy people indeed, Ps. cxliv. 12, 15. Such as these are the things requisite to make peace a complete blessing. But now we are,

2. To show you the requisiteness of the concurrence and concomitancy of such things, to the mentioned purpose; or how it may appear, that such things as these are necessary to complete this blessing, or to make it a truly valuable or a special blessing. In order hereto note,

1. That there is such a thing as a special blessing, very distinguishable from such blessings as are merely common. We read of one Jabez, 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10. said to be more honourable than his brethren; and somewhat very remarkable (as we are to reckon, when to the Divine wisdom it was thought fit to be inserted amidst a genealogical discourse) is further said of him, *viz.* that he called to the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldst bless me indeed, &c. and 'tis added, God granted what he requested. It seems, besides what goes under the common notion of blessing, he reckoned there was somewhat more peculiar, which he calls blessing indeed. There is a known Hebraism in that expression, what we read, bless me indeed, is, bless me in blessing me; *q. d.* let me have a blessing within a blessing; let me have that blessing whereof the other is but a cortex, the outside; let me have that blessing that is wrapt up and enclosed in the external blessing. And because it is said, And God granted his request, we have reason to understand it was somewhat very peculiar that God vouchsafed unto him; and that account which some give us, has a look that way, that God vouchsafed him somewhat more extraordinary in the kind of mental and intellectual endowments: for we are otherwise informed, that this Jabez became a noted doctor among the Jews, and that the city, called after his name, was thereupon afterwards the residence of such as were most learned in their laws, Vatabl. apud Critic. That is to be blessed indeed, to have these things conferred, that do reach the mind and affect the inner man; to be blessed with spiritual blessings from the heavenly places, as in that Eph. i. 3. There is a spiritual sort of blessing, that may be enclosed in the external blessing; and particularly in this of peace, which while it is common to the people of God with other men, is itself not common.

2. I further note, that the things I have mentioned to you, they are of that special kind, they are either immediate spiritual blessings, or subservient to such; whereupon now we may, from several considerations, evince to you, that without them such an external good, as this of peace, is not a complete blessing.

1. It is no argument of God's special favour. The best and most valuable blessings are from the Εὐδοκία θελήματος, *the good pleasure of his will*, Eph. i. 3, 4, 5. Other men may enjoy external benefits, may both prosper in war and flourish in peace, as well and often more than God's own people. You read of a time, wherein the whole earth is said to be at rest and quiet, Isa. xiv. 7. Therefore mere peace is no mark of special divine favour, and so is not, abstractly considered, a complete blessing, not a self-desirable thing.

2. Men are not made by it the better men. They may enjoy peace, and being carnal-minded men before, may still continue so, as great strangers to God as they were, as vain and sensual, as profligate and licentious, as useless in the world, as mischievous, every way as ill men as ever. And,

3. They may, by mere external peace, become so much the worse men. That may be an occasion to them of their growing worse and worse, the prosperity of fools (*i. e.* of wicked men) slays and destroys them, Prov. i. 32. 'Tis an observation that runs through the course of time, that as wars at length beget an enforced peace, so peace infers free trade and commerce, and that plenty, and that pride and wantonness; so these run us back in an easy but unhappy circle, to be as we were, in war again. And if that prove not the present or the speedy consequent, that ensues which is worse than war; unless God vouchsafe that other sort of blessing, which will influence and better men's minds. Vice springs up in the more fattened soil, men's lusts will soon prove more oppressive tyrants than they can have freed themselves from, by the justest and most prosperous war; and will subdue them to a far viler and more ignoble servitude. An ingenious writer of those affairs observes, that the former Scipio[a] opened the way to the Roman power, the latter to their luxury; their virtue languished, and they were conquered by their own vices, who before could conquer the world.[b] That noted moralist says, *Infirmi est animi non posse pati divitias*, 'tis a *weak mind that cannot bear a prosperous condition*; but where are there minds strong enough to bear it, if they be

a Vell. Patercul.

b Sen.

not blest from above with somewhat better than that prosperity itself?

4. Men may, notwithstanding mere external peace, be as miserable in this and in the other world, as if they had never known it; and much more, if by it they have been the more wicked. I beseech you consider, are they a blessed people, or is that a blessed man, between whom and eternal misery there is but a breath? He may but breathe another breath, and be in the midst of flames; is he happy this moment, that may be as miserable as any devil the next? Those things can only be complete blessings to any, that are inseparable ones, and that will make them for ever blessed. For me to have but such a blessing as does not make me blessed; what an unblest blessing is this! A philosopher can tell you, blessedness cannot be a thing separable from myself; not a χωριστόν τι, *Arist.* It can much less be such a thing as may leave me miserable to all eternity, least of all what may make me so, by degenerating into a curse, as Malachi ii. 2. Therefore these are demonstrations, that mere external peace, without such additions as you have heard of, can never be a complete blessing, nor such as can be understood vouchsafed to the people of God as their ultimate and consummative felicity. It must in the mean time be acknowledged, that as a people may belong to God externally, more than another people; and may sometime be externally more reformed than at other times, so peace, with other external good things, may thereupon be afforded them, as less expressive marks of God's favour, and approbation of their more regular course: and by the tenor of God's particular covenant with the people of Israel, might more certainly be expected so to be. Yet this is a state wherein it is not reasonable or safe for any finally to acquiesce.

I therefore now come to the promised use, which will correspond to the two general heads I have been discoursing of: First, to let you see—what cause of thanksgiving we have in reference to the former, the blessing of peace abstractly considered, and—Secondly, what sort of supplication we have in reference to the latter, the additions that are requisite to make it a complete blessing.

1. As to the former. Since peace is so valuable a thing considered apart, as you have heard it is; this points out to us the matter of thanksgiving, for which this day is appointed, that God has preserved our king, amidst so innumerable dangers abroad; that he has brought him home to us in safety; that he has made him the instrument of that peace that we find is at length brought about, wherein he is returned to us a greater conqueror then if he had routed and destroyed never so potent armies of our enemies in the field. We have reason to understand the matter so. By prevailing in war, he had only conquered by force; by prevailing for peace, he has conquered by wisdom and goodness. By prevailing in war, he had only conquered the bodily power of our enemies, or their baser part; by prevailing for peace, he has conquered their minds. By prevailing in war, he had brought about the good only of one side; by prevailing for peace, he has brought about the real benefit of both sides, a far more diffusive blessing. By prevailing in war, he had conquered enemies; by prevailing for peace, he has conquered enmity itself. By prevailing in war, he had overcome other men; but in prevailing for peace, considering his martial spirit, and his high provocations, he has done a far greater thing, he has conquered himself, whom none ever conquered before. Besides what this great blessing of peace, generally considered, contains in itself, we ought to amplify it to ourselves; being brought about by such means, wherein we have so particular a concern. This ought to add with us a very grateful relish to it, for it is a glory to our nation that God has set a prince on the English throne that could signify so much to the world; the beams of that glory God hath cast on him, reflect and shine upon his people; to be made the head among other nations, and not the tail, God hath in his word taught us not to count it an inconsiderable thing. And it is our more peculiar glory that our king is renowned, not by throwing death and destruction every where round about him, but by spreading the benefits included in peace through the neighbouring nations; and is returned to us, leaving the rest of Europe only to lament that they all live not under his government. I pray God he may meet with no ungrateful returns, and that none may be so ill minded as to grudge at power so lodged as to save us, who were less concerned at its being lodged where it could only be designed to destroy us. In the mean time, it might excite us to the higher pitches of thankfulness to Almighty God, for this blessing of the present peace, if we did consider—both what it hath cost, and —whereto it is improvable. But the former consideration I shall not insist upon, lest any should make an undue use of it; and the latter I leave to the following head, which we are next to proceed to, *viz.*

Secondly, To show what matter of supplication remains to us, upon the latter account. That is, with reference to such things as are yet wanting to make this blessing of peace a complete blessing, and without which it cannot be understood to be such; but we may be left at last a most miserable people, and so much the more miserable, by how much the higher favours we have to account for, that not being improved must have been thrown away upon us. The mercies included in the peace, will be unimproved and lost, without the mentioned additions. Whereof all the several heads that were recited belong to one, *viz.* that of spiritual blessing. That therefore, in the general, we have to pray for, that God may be said to bless us indeed, to bless us in blessing us; *viz.* that he would bless us with spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies (*i. e.* in heavenly things or from the heavenly places) in Christ Jesus, as Eph. i. 3. Let us, I pray you, learn to distinguish between a self-desirable good, that in its own nature is such, so immutably and invariably, that it can never degenerate, or cease to be such; and what is only such by accident, and in some circumstances may be much otherwise. Spiritual good, that of the mind and spirit, and which makes that better, especially that which accompanies salvation, (Heb. vi. 9.) that runs into eternity, and goes with us into the other world, is of the former sort. External good is but *res media*, capable of being to us sometimes good and sometimes evil as the case may alter. Blessings of this kind may become curses, Mal. ii. 2. I will curse your blessings, yea I have cursed them already. A man's table may become his snare, and that which was for his welfare, a trap, Ps. lxix. 22. Merely external blessings are curses, when they become the fuel of lusts, when they animate men unto contests against Heaven, rebellions against the Divine government; when, like Jeshurun, men wax fat by them, and kick against heaven, Deut. xxxii. This we are always liable to till spiritual blessings intermingle with our other blessings; and nothing should more convince the world, that the kindest and most benign part of the divine government lies in immediate influences on the minds of men; and that consequently their own felicity depends thereon. Let all things that can be imagined concur in the kind of external good, and they can never make him a happy man, that has an ill mind; he will always be his own hell, and carry that about with him wheresoever he goes; he will be a constant spring and fountain of misery to himself, misery and he cannot be separated from one another: There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God; but he will be always a troubled sea, whose waters cast forth mire and dirt, Isa. lvii. 20, 21. The philosophy of pagans would have made them ashamed to place their felicity in any thing without, or foreign to themselves.

But we are Christians, and shall we not much more be ashamed to take other, or even opposite, measures of blessedness, to those which are given us by our Divine Master! To be poor in spirit, upon just accounts mourners, meek, hungry and thirsty after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers, to submit to be persecuted for righteousness sake, these are his characters of a blessed man; and he places that blessedness itself in congenerous things, Matt. v. 3, 4, 5, &c. Let us learn from him, and collect that nothing but wickedness can make us miserable. What an overflowing deluge have we in view! tending to subvert our religion and our civil state together! nor have we another effectual remedy in view, but the Spirit of God, if he will vouchsafe to pour it forth. The great enemy of mankind is come in upon us like a flood, and only the Spirit of the Lord can lift up a standard against him, Isa. lix. 19. The Spirit of the Lord would be to us as a puri-

fying flame, to burn up our filthiness, and enkindle in us that divine love, that would make us zealous of good works. And this should be with us the matter of earnest and incessant supplication, not with diffidence, for he will give his Spirit to them that ask him, Luke xi. 13. Nor with diminishing thoughts of the necessity and value of the gift; take heed of that, for that were to be miserable, and undone by a principle; to be misled, by a profane false judgment, into the contempt of the most highly valuable things, that are most necessary to our true welfare; and which are all contained in the gift of the Spirit, as you may see by comparing Matt. vii. and Luke xi. with one another. In the one place it is said, he will give good things to them that ask him, in the other place it is said, his Spirit; implying, that the gift of the Spirit involves in it all good things. And certainly nothing can be good to any man, till he hath that Spirit, that makes him good; and we are greatly concerned to supplicate mightily for the effusion of that blessed Spirit, for these two purposes especially. First, that there may be a larger diffusion amongst us of vital religion, whereby we shall be at peace with God. Secondly, that Christian love may more abound, whereby Christians may be composed to mutual peace, and more disposed to mutual communion with one another.

1. That there may be a larger diffusion of vital religion. Wherein stands indeed their being at peace with God, when there is a mutual amplexus between him and them, mind touching mind, and spirit spirit; when he does, by his Spirit, embrace the spirits of men, and infuse light and life into them, and adapt and suit them for his communion. To this purpose, we have great cause to beg and supplicate earnestly, for a greater pouring forth of his Spirit, that this living religion may spread amongst us; for we appear to be under a doom, while it does not so, that seeing we should see, and not perceive, &c. Isa. vi. O the fearful guilt incurred, one Lord's day after another! When great assemblies meet together, multitudes are besought and supplicated that they would be reconciled to God, but too few listen; peace with God seems not a valuable thing with us, his favour, in which is life, is little set by. When with many a one a treaty is continued, in order to peace, through many years, seven, ten, twenty, thirty, nay forty years, and yet this treaty brings not about a peace at last; but they stand out still hardened in their impenitency, infidelity, obstinacy, enmity against God and his Christ, through the power and dominion that an earthly, vain, carnal mind has in them, and over them; what can our peace with men signify in this case? What, do we not know, that the friendship of this world is enmity against God? Jam. iv. 4. 1 John ii. 15. And that it is as impossible for a man to be a sincere lover of God, and an over intense lover of this world, as to have two Gods; *i. e.* two supreme powers to govern him, two supreme goods to satisfy him. This must breed a perpetual war, till the case alters between thee and him that made thee; and wo to him that strives with his Maker. To have the wrath of God, armed with omnipotency, engaged against thee; and yet that thou shouldst not covet peace, that yet thou shouldst not cry for peace! To have the peace-making blood of thy Redeemer crying to thee, O be at peace with God! to have him that shed it thus bespeaking thee, I am ready to do the part of a days-man, I have died upon the cross that I might do so, that I might effect, and bring about a peace between God and thee; I am ready to mediate, make use of me; I will undertake on God's part, that he shall pardon thee, that he shall forgive thee, and let the controversy fall, if yet thy heart on thy part will yield, melt, and relent, and thou cry for mercy. He came with this design into this world, the proclamation of angels at his coming spoke his design; Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and good-will towards men. Shall not all this be believed? or shall men pretend to believe it, and not consider it, or not look upon it as a considerable thing?

2. And there is as much need too, that we supplicate for this Spirit, as a Spirit of mutual love among Christians, to reconcile them to one another. Which indeed is also but to Christianize them, to make vital religion take place with them; for that same Spirit of Christ, which animates his body, and makes them his living members, makes them such to one another. And the matter speaks itself, that opposite spirit unto truly Christian peace and love, which appears amongst us, nothing but the Spirit of Christ can overcome; we are not to expect a cure of our distempers in this kind, but by the pouring forth of this blessed Spirit. And if there be not a cure, we are certainly to expect the pouring forth of his wrath; and things look with a threatening aspect upon us to this purpose. Now that opportunity is so inviting, God's call so loud, and the way so plain; that yet an indisposition to peace should be so obstinate, that breaches should be kept open by trifles and unaccountable things of which no man of sense can pretend to give an account; that there is strife too manifestly, not from the love of truth, whereof not one hair needs be lost, (nor of any other valuable thing,) but merely from the love of strife; when as to the most material and important truths, men are agreed, but would seem to disagree, they mean the same things, but impute to one another a different meaning, and pretend to know the others' mind better than themselves, that on that pretence they may quarrel with them: all this looks fatally. And our unjust angers at one another are too expressive of God's just anger with us all; that his good Spirit, that Spirit of love, peace, kindness, benignity is so notoriously resisted, vexed, grieved, and despited by us. And the consequences are likely for some time to be very dismal; though when God hath proceeded in a way of punitive animadversion, so far as he shall judge necessary for the vindication of his own name, and the honour of our religion so scandalously misrepresented to the world, it will be easy to him by one victorious effort of that spirit to reduce the Christian church to its original genuine temper, and make it shine again in its own native light and lustre. But in the mean time, I cannot see that there is greater need of an overpowering influence of the Holy Ghost to draw men into union with Christ, and thereby to bring back apostate souls to God, or to work in them faith and repentance; than to bring them into union upon Christian terms with one another. Or that the love of this world, or any of the most ignominious sensual lust, or vice, (drunkenness, gluttony, or any other,) are more hardly or more rarely overcome, than the envy, wrath, malice, which Christians ordinarily are not at all shy of expressing toward one another.

I speak upon some experience, lamenting that having this occasion (which sense of duty will not let me balk) I have also so much cause to mention that foregoing observation. For I cannot forget, that sometime discoursing with some very noted persons, about the business of union among Christians, it hath been freely granted me, that there was not so much as a principle left (among those the discourse had reference to) upon which to disagree; and yet the same fixed aversion to union continued as before, as a plain proof they were not principles but ends we were still to differ for. In this case what but the power of an Almighty Spirit can overcome? To quote texts of Scripture upon such occasions signifies nothing even to those who profess a veneration for those holy oracles of God. Let such places be mentioned as are expressly directed against division, wrath, strife, slandering or backbiting one another, and they avail no more, than if the vice were the virtue, or the virtue the vice; no more than if it were a command to Christians to malign, to traduce, to backbite one another. To urge so plain and numerous scriptures in these cases, it is to as little purpose, as to oppose one's breath to a storm; it is the same thing, as if all scriptures, that had any aspect or look this way, were quite put out of the canon; and all this, with men zealous for the divine authority of the Scripture. And indeed it is come to that pass, as to look like a jest to expect that any man should be swayed by Scripture, or the most convincing reason agreeable thereto, against his own passion, or humour; or against the (supposed, though never so grossly mistaken) interest of his party.

Nor is it mere peace that is to be aimed at, but free mutual Christian communion with such, as do all hold the head, Christ. As peace between nations infers commerce; so among Christian churches, it ought to infer, a fellowship in acts of worship. I wish there were no cause to say this is declined, when no pretence is left against it, but false accusation; none but what must be supported by lying and calumny. Too many are busy at inventing of that which is no where to be found, that exists not in the

nature of things, that they may have a colour for continued distance. And is not this to fly in the face of the authority under which we live, *i. e.* the ruling power of the kingdom of Christ, the Prince of peace? 'Tis strange they are not ashamed to be called Christians, that they do not discard and abandon the name, that can allow themselves in such things! And 'tis here to be noted, that 'tis quite another thing, what is in itself true or false, right or wrong; and what is to be a measure or boundary of Christian communion. Are we yet to learn that Christian communion is not amongst men that are perfect; but that are labouring under manifold imperfections, both in knowledge and holiness! and whatsoever mistake in judgment, or obliquity in practice, can consist with holding the head, ought to consist also with being of the same Christian communion; not the same locally, which is impossible, but the same occasionally, as any providence invites at this or that time, and mentally in heart and spirit at all times. And to such peace (and consequently communion) we are all called in one body, Col. iii. 15. We are expressly required to receive one another, (which cannot but mean into each other's communion,) and not to doubtful disputations, Rom. xiv. 1. If any be thought to be weak, and thereupon to differ from us in some or other sentiments, if the difference consist with holding the head, they are not, because they are weak, to be refused communion, but received; and received because the Lord has received them, ver. 3. All that we should think Christ has received into his communion, we ought to receive into ours, Rom. xv. 7. Scriptures are so express to this purpose that nothing can be more. And indeed to make new boundaries of Christian communion is to make a new Christianity, and a new Gospel, and new rules of Christ's kingdom; and by which to distinguish subjects and rebels, and in effect to dethrone him, to rival him in his highest prerogative; *viz.* the establishing the terms of life and death, for men living under his Gospel. It is to confine salvation, in the means of it, to such or such a party, such a church, arbitrarily distinguished from the rest of Christians; as if the privileges of his kingdom belonged to a party only; and that for instance, the Lord's table were to lose its name, and be no longer so called, but the table of this or that church, constituted by rules of their own devising. For if it be the Lord's table, they are to keep it free, to be approached upon the Lord's terms, and not their own. In the mean time, what higher invasion can there be of Christ's rights? And since the Christian church became so over-wise above what is written, in framing new doctrines, and rules of worship; how miserably it hath languished, and been torn in pieces, they cannot be ignorant, who have read any thing of the history of it.

And indeed there is not a difference to be found, amongst them that hold the head, but must be so minute, that it cannot be a pretence for refusing communion; for true Christian charity will, at least, resolve it into weakness. And men are generally so kind to themselves, that he from whom another differs, will be very apt to think himself the stronger; then does the rule conclude him, You that are strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and do not dispute with them, but receive them. This obligation immediately lies on the strong, and therefore must take hold of them that think themselves so, not to dispute with the others, but receive them; because the Lord has received them. Does he take them into his communion, and will not you take them into yours? To profess want of charity in excuse is to excuse a fault by a wickedness; it is to usurp Christ's judgment seat, and invade his office, Rom. xiv. 4, 10. Therefore wheresoever there is any such case to be found, that let a man be never so sound in the faith, never so orthodox, let him be in all things else never so regular through his whole conversation, if he do not submit to some doubtful thing, thought perhaps a matter of indifferency on the one side and unlawful on the other; this person must be excluded Christian communion for no other known pretence, but only that he presumed to doubt somewhat in the imposed terms: for this very doubt he is to be treated as a heathen or publican, or indeed no more to be received into our communion, than a dog, or a swine. How will this be justified at Christ's tribunal? But how much less justifiable is it, if not only communion be refused, but ruin designed, to such as differ from us, about those our arbitrary additions to Christ's rules, and boundaries of Christian communion! And scarce can very serious persons (even in so serious a matter) forbear to smile, when they see them that have done so much harm to their fellow-Christians attempt to justify it, only in effect from their having power to do it; which would as well justify any thing, since no man does what he could not do.

Nor yet do I look upon this proneness to innovate, and devise other terms of Christian communion than Christ hath himself appointed, as the peculiar character of a party; but as a symptom of the diseased state of the Christian church, too plainly appearing in all parties: as I also reckon it too low and narrow a design, to aim at a oneness of communion among Christians of this and that single party and persuasion; which would but make so much the larger ulcus and tumor, a greater unnatural apostem or secession, in the sacred body of our blessed Lord. Nothing in this kind can be a design worthy of a Christian, or suitable to the Spirit of Christ; but to have Christian communion extended, and limited, according to the extent and limits of visibly serious and vital Christianity. And hereof, that distinguishing judgment, which is necessary, is as little difficult, as in private conversation between a visible friend and a visible enemy; or in public and political, between a visible subject and a visible rebel. So far as a discrimination can, and according to Christ's rules (not our own unbounded fancies) ought to be made, any serious living Christian, of whatsoever party or denomination, I ought to communicate with as such, and with only such. For living Christians to sever from one another, or to mingle with the dead, is an equal transgression; nor must our judgment of any such case be guided by mere charity; but must guide it, being itself guided by the known laws of Christ.

To sum up all; then shall we be in happy circumstances, when once we shall have learned to distinguish between the essentials of Christianity, and accidental appendages: and between accidents of Christ's appointing, and of our devising; and to dread affixing of our own devices to so sacred an institution. Much more, when every truth or duty, contained in the Bible, cannot be counted essential or necessary; when we shall have learnt not only not to add inventions of our own to that sacred frame, but much more not to presume to insert them into the order of essentials or necessaries, and treat men as no Christians for wanting them. When the Gospel shall have its liberty to the utmost ends of the earth. When the regenerating Spirit shall go forth with it, and propagate a divine and God-like nature, every where among men. When regeneration shall be understood to signify the communicating of such a nature and such dispositions to men. When the weight of such words comes to be apprehended. (He that hateth his brother, abideth in death, 1 John 3.) When to be born of God, ceases to signify with us, being proselyted to this or that church, formed and distinguished by human device. When religious pretences cease to serve political purposes, when the interest of a party ceases to weigh more with us, than the whole Christian interest. When sincerity shall be thought the noblest embellishment of a Christian. When the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, Isa. xi. 6, 7, 8, 9. Then will our peace be as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea, Isa. xlviii. 18. And the glorious Lord will himself be to us a place of broad waters, ch. xxxiii. 21. Where straits, and rocks, and shelves, shall no more affright or endanger us. But if these things take no place with us, then have we cause to apprehend, that the things of our peace are yet hid from our eyes.

A SERMON

FOR THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS.

ROMANS XIII. 4.

FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD TO THEE FOR GOOD.

THE temper of this our present assembly ought to be not only serious, but also mournful; for the occasion it hath reference to, is both very important, and most deplorable, and requires to be attended to, as with very intense consideration, so with deep sorrow. Even rivers of tears running down our eyes, as the words are, Psal. cxix. 136. could not more than equal the sadness of the case, *i. e.* the same there mentioned; because men (as is meant by the indefinite they) kept not God's law. That there should be such disorders in the intellectual world! That reasonable creatures should be so degenerate, that 'tis become hardly accountable why they are called so! They are said to be constituted and distinguished by reason, but disdain to be governed by it, accounting their senses and their vices their better and wiser directors. With us the case is yet worse! that in a Christian city and kingdom the insolencies of wickedness are so high, tumultuate at such a rate, and so daringly assault heaven, that the rigour of laws, the severity of penalties, the vigilancy and justice of magistrates, with the vigorous assisting diligence of all good men, in their several stations, are more necessary, than sufficient to repress them. The same considerations that should excite our zeal, ought also to influence our grief; and the more apparently necessary it is that all possible endeavours be used for redress, and the stronger and more convictive arguments can be brought to evince it, the deeper sense we ought to have of the evils that create this necessity, and the more feelingly we should lament them. And if this be the temper of this assembly, and of all other, upon this occasion, this would give us measures, and set us right, as to the whole business of such a season. Nobody will then think it should be the business of the sermon, to please curious ears, or of the hearers to criticise upon the sermon, or that it ought to be my present business to compliment the worthy persons that have associated on this account, how laudable soever their undertaking is. But it will be the common agreed business of us all, to take to heart the sad exigency of the case, to be suitably affected with it, and quickened to what shall appear to be our duty in reference thereto. And though the words I have read do more directly respect the part and office of rules, yet since there is that relation between them that govern, and those that are under government, that the duty of the one will plainly imply and connote the duty of the other; I shall so consider the words, as they may have a direct or collateral reference to all sorts of hearers; and do point out the duty, as well of them that live under government, as of them that govern.

We are therefore to take notice, that the text admits, either of an absolute consideration, or a relative. *Absolutely* considered, 'tis in *assertion; relatively*, it is in an *argument*, as the introductive particle, *for*, shows, 1. For the *absolute* consideration of the words, as they are an assertion, we are to see what they assert. The person spoken of under the term *He*, is any ruler, supreme or subordinate, as in that parallel text, which we may take for a comment upon this, is expressed, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. The words ἐξουσίαι, and ἄρχοντες, used in this context, admit of the same extent. So, among others, that great man Grotius understands this place also, not only of kings and princes, but whosoever are the *Tutores status publici*, (borrowing that expression from Seneca,) say that are to take care of the public state, by whatsoever name they are designed. Indefinitely, any magistrate whatsoever. That which is said of such a one, contains an account of the original, and the end, of his office and power. The *original* of it, that he is the minister of God, which signifies he is, as such, to act only by his authority, derived from him; as ver. 1. There is no power but from God, and the powers that be, are ordained of God. Which also implies, that such power is to be used for God, and that consequently God is to be the ruler's first and last; and he is to be subordinate to God, both as his principle and end. Acting by his authority, he is by consequence to act for his interest; his minister, or servant, is to serve him.

But besides what is thus implied of the general and ultimate end of the magistrate's power, in what is more directly said of the *original* of it; we have also a more explicit account of the *end* of it, *viz.* the next, and more particular end, which is two-fold. The end for *whom*, indefinitely expressed. For thee, *i. e.* for every, or any one that lives under government; and by consequence, the whole governed community. For all the parts make up the whole. And further we have the end for *what*, *viz.* for good, the good of each individual, and of the whole community, as comprehending all the individuals. Thus we see what the words contain *absolutely* considered, as they are an *assertion*.

2. We are to consider them *relatively*, as they are an *argument*. So the particle, *for*, shows their *relation*, and directs us backward, where we shall see what they argue. And we find they are brought in to enforce the duty before enjoined, which is two-fold.—Primary, and more principal.—Consequential, deduced from the former.—The *primary* duty is that ver. 1. Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, or to the powers that are above us. Some blame the comparative expression, *sublimioribus, higher*, for which there is no pretence, from the word ὑπερέχουσαι, that only signifies the powers mentioned, to be over us, whether in a higher or lower degree. Let them be less or more above us, we are to be subject to them.—The *subsequent* duty is double: first, that they are not to be resisted. A doctrine which from the terms of the context is capable of being so stated, as neither to be just matter of reproach or scandal to the wise and good, nor of sport and laughter to another sort of men. But that is not my present business. And secondly, that they are not to be (unduly) dreaded; or apprehended as a terror, *i. e.* not otherwise, than (in the design of their appointment) they are so, *viz.* to evil works and the workers of them, not to

the good, ver. 3. A fear of reverence is indeed due from all to their character, and the dignity of their station: a filial fear, that of children, for they are the fathers of their country; not a servile, or that of slaves, except from such as are so; evil-doers, who are slaves of the vilest and more ignoble sort; to their own lusts, that enslave their minds, which might otherwise enjoy the most generous liberty, under the meanest and more oppressive external servitude. The text, according to its immediate reference, is but an amplification of the reason alleged, why the magistrate is not to be looked upon with terror and affright, by any but such as resolve upon a profligately wicked course of life, not by such as intend only a course of well-doing. For, if thou be such, he is the minister of God to thee for good; his sword is only formidable when it fetches its blow from above, when it is bathed in heaven, as we may borrow the words, Isa. xxxiv. 5. when it is wielded according to divine appointment, and God and he concur in the same stroke. When it is otherwise, 'tis true that the fallible or unrighteous human ruler may for well-doing afflict thee, and therein do thee wrong, but he can do thee no hurt, even though the stroke were mortal, Luke xii. 4. for our Lord forbids the fear of what is no worse; so said Socrates of them that persecuted him to death, They can kill me, but cannot hurt me. Who is it that can harm you (saith a great apostle) if ye be followers of that which is good? 1 Pet. iii. 13. And 'tis added, ver. 14. If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye——And hath any man reason to be afraid of being happy?

But though this be the more immediate reference of these words, "He is the minister of God to thee for good," and is, therefore, not to be unduly feared; they do yet ultimately and more principally respect the grand precept first laid down, of being subject to the powers over us. Which is evident, for that upon this very ground, and the intervening consideration, which further illustrate it, this same precept is resumed and pressed upon conscience, and a necessity is put upon it, on the same account, *viz.* that because the magistrate is the minister of God for good, and is to be a terror to evil-doers, and hath a sword put into his hands for that purpose, which he is not to bear in vain, but must be the minister of God in this kind, *viz.* as a revenger, to execute wrath, upon such as do evil; that therefore we must needs be subject, and that not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. This is therefore the principal relation of these words, *viz.* as an argument to prove that he, the magistrate, is the minister of God to us for good; that therefore we ought not only not to resist him, when he is doing his duty, nor be afraid of him when we are but doing ours; but that we also ought to be subject to him; and that, not only that we may escape wrath, but that we may satisfy conscience. This is therefore the relation, according whereto we shall consider these words, *viz.* as they are an argument to enforce the required subjection. Which subjection, that we may the more fully apprehend, 'twill be requisite with the more care to consider the propriety of the word used to express it. It is a word that carries order, τάξις, in the bowels of it, ὑποτασσέσθω, ver. 1. and ὑποτάσσεσθαι, ver. 4. and with the preposition ὑπὸ, it signifies order under another, as of inferiors under superiors; it imports therefore not to be subject only, but subordinate and subservient. And the form wherein it is here used, admitting of its being taken not strictly in the passive sense, but in the middle, whereupon it may be indifferently capable of being rendered actively, *viz.* not only to be subordinate, but by your own act, and with your own design, subordinate yourselves to the magistrate, come into order under him, as he is God's minister invested by him with power for such and such purposes. This, without straining, carries the sense yet higher.

And whereas τάξις is a word of known military import, and signifies the order of an army formed for battle, wherein every one knows his own rank, place, and station, 'tis as if it were said, take your place, come into rank, that you may, under the commander's conduct, *in acie stare*, stand in order of battle; as the word ἀντιτάσσεσθαι, rendered to resist the ruler, is *ex adverso in acie stare, to stand in rank, or in battalia, against him.* You are not only not to resist, but you are to assist, and in your place and station stand by him, whom God hath deputed to be his minister, as he is to promote common good, and be a terror to them that do evil. This was the just claim and demand of that excellent prince, Psal. xciv. 16. Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers, and stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? This, according to lexicographers of good note, is the import of that word, which we lay such weight upon, and accordingly very valuable expositors understand this place. By this time therefore you may see what place and order these words, I pitched upon, have in the series of the apostle's discourse; and thereupon what aspect they have upon the design for which we are met; pursuant whereto, they admit of being thus summed up.

That for this reason, and under this notion, as the magistrate is to be a terror to them that do evil, and therein God's minister for good to them over whom he is set; it belongs to every soul, or to all persons under his government, to be each one in his station, and according to his capacity, actively, and with their own design, subordinate and subservient to him herein.—In speaking to this I shall show,—I. That the magistrate is God's minister, upon the mentioned account. II. That therefore such duty is incumbent upon all that live under government. The former whereof is a doctrinal proposition, the other the use of it.

I. That the magistrate is the minister of God for the good of them over whom he is set. This we are to consider by parts.

That, 1. He is God's minister. Hereof none can doubt, who doubt or deny not the being of God. His being God's minister, signifies his deriving his power from him. Who else can be the fountain of power, but he who is the fountain of all Being? 'Tis true, the governing power hath not been always derived the same way, but it hath been always from the same fountain. When God was pleased to have a people within a peculiar sort of enclosure, more especially appropriate to himself; he was very particular in signifying his will, concerning all material things that concerned their government. What the form of it should be. What persons should govern, or in what way the power and right to govern should descend, and be conveyed to them. What laws they should be governed by. What the methods should be of governing, according to those laws.

Since it is very evident much is left to the prudence of men, always to be directed by general rules of equity, and as these allow, by immediate interpositions of his own providence; I resolve this discourse shall be involved in no controversies, and therefore shall not determine, nor go about to dispute as to what is so left, how much or how little that may be. But it is plain and indisputable, that the governing power he reserves, and claims to himself; *i. e.* not to exercise it himself immediately, in a political way; but to communicate and transmit it to them that shall. So that in what way soever it is derived to this or that person, or under whatsoever form, the conferring of it he makes his own act: as we find it said to Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. ii. 37. The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom. And he is told, ch. iv. 32. The Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he will. And so much, you see, is in this context asserted to him over and over. Two things are plain in this matter—That it is the mind of God there should be such a thing as magistracy, and government in this world—And again, that men shall be governed by men, by some or other of themselves; who shall be, as the text speaks, God's ministers. As he is the original of the governing power, the administration shall be in them. And of the mind of God in both these there is sufficient indication by the very law of nature; how is it conceivable such sentiments should be so common, if they were not from a common cause? He seems to me to have determined well (if it be considered in what way the course of nature is now continued, and by whom all things consist) that makes the governing power to be from God, as the Author of nature;[a] and that though government, as it is such and such, be *juris humani*, it is *juris divini* absolutely considered, or as it is government. It was most apparently a thing worthy of God, when he peopled this world with such a sort of creatures as man, to provide for the maintaining of

[a] Hooker. de Leg. Lib. 1. C. 3, 4.

common order among them; who without government were but a Turba, a Colluvies, as a noted heathen speaks on a different account, a rout of men. Had man continued in unstained innocency, 'tis concluded on all hands there must have been a government among them; *i. e.* not punitive or coercive, for which there could have been no occasion; but directive and conservative of superiority and inferiority, as it is also even among the angels of heaven, where are no inordinate dispositions to be repressed. Much more is government, in the severer parts of it, necessary for lapsed man on earth; the making of restrictive laws, and governing by them. And that God should design the governing of men by men, was also most agreeable to the perfections of his nature; especially his wisdom and his goodness, considered in comparison to the imperfection of this our present state. When the government over Israel was a theocracy, God used the ministry of men in the management of it. That it should be his ordinary stated course to govern by voices or visions, or by frightful appearances, such as those on mount Sinai, had been very little suitable to this our state of probation; as his accurate wisdom we find hath determined; and was less agreeable to his benignity and goodness, which would not amazingly terrify, where he designed more gently to admonish and instruct. Hence had he regard to their frailty, who so passionately supplicated; let not God speak to us lest we die; and this his compassionate goodness we are led to consider, being next to treat of the end of this his constitution, *viz.*

2. That the magistrate is God's minister to men, for their good. Next to the sweet airs and breathings of the Gospel itself, where have we a kinder or more significant discovery of God's good will to men? Here we are to stay and wonder, not to assent only, but admire! To behold the world in a revolt! The dwellers on earth in arms, against heaven! And the counsels that are taken above are how to do them good! How God-like is this! How suitable to magnificent goodness! or beneficent greatness! being secure from hurt by their impotent attempts, and when revenge was so easy, to study not only not to harm them, nor also how they might less harm and mischief themselves; but how to do them good: this was every way great and most suitable to the greatness of God; wherein it falls into conjunction with so immense and absolute goodness, as doth beyond what any created mind would ask or think. This imports not implacableness, or destructive design towards the generality of mankind; but great benignity even to every soul, in as full extent as the command runs to be subject to the higher powers. This is, we find, another medium by which God testifies, or leaves not himself without witness, besides what we have elsewhere; that he gives men rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons.

The most compassionate eye of God beholds men, under the power of vicious inclination, bent upon destructive ways; whereas by the course of nature, which he hath fixed, he should give them ordinarily competent time, as he hath given them breath and being, and all things, Acts xvii. that they might seek after him, and labour to feel and find him out. They live in a contemptuous neglect of him, and are cruel to themselves, oft shorten their own time, live too fast, and make too much haste to dig their own graves, and turn their habitation into a charnel house; yea even bury themselves alive, in stupifying sensuality and vice. God, though provoked, hastens not their destruction by sudden revenge; he animadverts not upon them by flames and thunderbolts, nor amazes them by astonishing appearances; his terrors make them not afraid. He only clothes some, from among themselves, with his authority, who shall appear on the stage with them, as gods among men, resembling themselves in human nature, and God in power, as they should in other God-like excellencies; if men would so far co-operate towards their own welfare, as they ought, that by such gentler methods some stop might be put to the stream and flood of miseries, wherewith otherwise unrestrained wickedness is continually ready to deluge the world. The magistrate is herein an instrument of good and of wrath at once; these two things disagree not, to be a minister for good, and to execute wrath. This latter is said, in conformity to vulgar apprehension, because when men afflict one another, 'tis usually the effect of wrath; when a fixed, though most sedate and calm resolution to punish hath the same effect, this most different cause is called by the same name. In this allusion is wrath ascribed to God, the most serene and dispassionate of all beings; and hence they who represent him among men in authority, ought in this respect to be God-like too. *Magistratus non debet irasci*, judges (as Cicero most aptly speaks) ought to be *legum similes*, *like the laws themselves*, which are moved by no passion, are angry with no man, but keep one steady tenor, so as neither to despite an enemy, nor indulge a friend. To this temper it well agrees to design good (as in lancing a tumour) where one does a present hurt. Two ways may punishment be a proper and apt, though it be not always an effectual, means of doing good.

1. As it may work the good of the offenders themselves. To which it hath in itself a tendency, if the disease be not so strong and stubborn, as to defy the remedy; as it puts them upon reflecting, and should awaken in them their considering power. As in the matter of treason against a rightful power, *deliberasse est descivisse*, *to deliberate whether to be loyal*, or no, is to revolt, so it is in the just and glorious rupture that is to be made of the bonds of vice, whereby men are held as slaves under the usurped power of the devil's kingdom. If once they come duly to consider, they will disdain so vile a servitude; when they meet with a check in their way, it may occasion them to check themselves, and consider their ways. No external means do any good to the minds of men, otherwise than as they themselves are engaged, drawn in, and made parties, in some sense against, but (as we are compounded) in a higher and nobler for, ourselves. This comes in as one among external means of that kind, as do give some present uneasiness, but in order to after-advantage; it afflicts, 'tis true, and no affliction is for the present joyous but grievous, but yields afterwards a peaceable fruit. When the magistrate's power is called a sword; it signifies its business is to wound; but as wounds are generally painful, some are sanative healing wounds, and so are these designed and apt to be. They vex a while, but *vexatio dat intellectum*, it rouses the understanding, and is most apt to do so to good purpose in plain and undisputed cases; and where there is no pretence for conscience, in the cause one suffers for.

Where indeed a formed and fixed judgment of conscience once hath place, for the practice which exposes a man to suffering; mulcts and prisons, gibbets and fagots, are very improper means of illumination, or of public utility; if the civil peace, and the substance of religion, be not hurt by such practice. And the sincerity of that conscience is much to be suspected, that is ever altered by such methods; but no man will pretend it is against his conscience, not to be drunk, not to debauch, or to be sober, chaste, and virtuous. Therefore a man's way lies open to that consideration which is most immediately to influence his practice, to correct a lewd, and begin a regular good course. He needs not be detained with any subtle disputes, or be put to solve perplexed doubts, or answer specious arguments and objections. It is obvious to him to bethink himself: "What a strange sort of anomalous creature am I become, whom the law of mine own nature remonstrates against! How degenerate a thing! that have forsaken my own noble order of intelligent creatures, to herd with brutes! That have made myself unfit for human society, otherwise than as one that must bear a mark, wear a disgraceful scar, from the wound of a sword, not that of a public enemy, or my own; but a sword drawn in defence of the sacred rights of God, and to vindicate the honour of mankind!" And hereupon, if the crime be not capital, with the concurrent use of other appointed means, and the blessing of God upon all, (from whence only the good issue can be hoped for,) may a vicious person be so reclaimed, as to become of great use in the world. Yea, and if the crime be capital, such as that the criminal survives not the punishment, but the sword of justice must cut him off from the land of the living; our charity will not let us doubt but there have been instances, wherein a prison and arraignment, and the sentence of death, have been the best effectual means to the offenders, of their escaping the more terrible sentence, and

of obtaining eternal life. But however, though the ministry of civil justice doth often fail of its most desirable effects, as to the particular persons that suffer it; (as even the ministration of the Gospel of grace proves also ineffectual to many;) yet,

2. It is not only apt, but effectual, to do much good to others, and generally to the community. Punishment is justly said to be, in its proper design, medicinal to the delinquents; yet not always in the event.[b] But the common good it may serve, when contumacious offenders perish under the deserved infliction of it. This was the thing designed by the righteous Judge of all the earth, when he gave so particular directions how to punish offenders in such and such kinds, that others might hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. And in all equal government, it is the design of penal laws that the terror might reach to all, the punishment itself but to a few. And when the utmost endeavours that can be used, shall have had that happy success to reduce a vast number of offenders to a paucity, we should rejoice to see that there needed to be but few examples made in such kinds. In the mean time where this sword of the Lord, in the hands of his ministers of justice, is unsheathed, and used according to the exigency of the case; it is an apt and likely means to have a happy effect, for the good of the community; both as it may put a stop to the prevailing wickedness of men, and may avert from a nation the provoked wrath of God.

1. As it may give some check to the daringness and triumph of unrebuked wickedness, which, indeed, naturally carries in it a pusillanimous meanness, and a vile abjection of mind, so as no where to insult, but where it meets, in those who should oppose it, a timorous fainting and succumbency; it so far resembles the devil, whose offspring it is, that being resisted it flees. When men find that while they dare to affront the universal Ruler, and offer indignities to his throne; there are those, that, clothed with his authority, and bearing his character, dare to vindicate the injury; when they feel the smart and cost of open wickedness, it will, no doubt, become at least less open, and seek closer corners. They will not long hold up the head, in so hopeless and deplorate a cause, that can afford them no support, no relief to their abject sinking spirits, in suffering for it. What encouraging testimony of conscience can they have, that not only act from no direction of conscience, but in defiance of it? What god can they hope will reward their sufferings which they incur by highest contempt of God? And if such gross immoralities be somewhat generally redressed, as more directly fall under the magistrate's animadversion, how great a common good must it infer, inasmuch as those evils, in their own nature, tend to the detriment, decay, and ruin of a people where they prevail! They darken the glory of a nation, which how great a lustre hath it cast abroad in the world from the Romans and Spartans, and other civilized people! when their sumptuary and other laws were strictly observed, that repressed undue excesses; and when temperance, frugality, industry, justice, fidelity, and consequently fortitude, and all other virtues, excelled and were conspicuous among them. It were a great thing we should have to transmit to posterity, might we see England recover its former, or arrive to the further glory, which it is to be hoped it may acquire in these kinds!

Yea, and the vices which are endeavoured to be redressed, are such as not only prejudice the reputation, but the real welfare of any nation. Profane swearing tends gradually to take away the reverence of an oath; which, where it is lost, what becomes of human society? And more sensual vices tend to make us an effeminate, mean-spirited, a desident, lazy, slothful, unhealthful people, useless to the glorious prince and excellent government we live under, neither fit to endure the hardships nor encounter the hazards of war, nor apply ourselves to the business nor undergo the labours that belong to a state of peace, and do consequently tend to infer upon us a deplorable, but unpitied, poverty; and (which all will pretend to abhor) slavery at length. For they are most unfit for an ingenuous, free sort of government, or to be otherwise governed than as slaves or brutes, who have learnt nothing of self-government; and are at the next step of being slaves to other men, who have first made themselves slaves to their own vicious inclinations. Thus are such liable to all sorts of temporal calamities and miseries in this world. Besides, what is of so far more tremendous import, that the same vile and stupifying lusts tend to infer an utter indisposition to comport with, or attend to, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God; and so to ruin men's hopes for the other world, and make their case unconceivably worse, in the judgment of the great day, than theirs of Tyre or Sidon, Sodom or Gomorrha. But how much may a just, prudent, well tempered vigilancy and severity do, towards the prevention of all this! and so much the more, by how much public animadversions, shall render the things men incur punishment for, not only in common estimate unrighteous, but ignominious things.

That principle of shame in the nature of man, if by proper applications it were endeavoured to be wrought upon, would contribute more to the reforming a vicious world, than most other methods that have ever been tried to that purpose. 'Tis a tender passion, of quick and most acute sense; things that are thought opprobrious, have so sensible a pungency with them, that (though all tempers are not herein alike) many that can feel little else, reckon a disgrace an unsufferable thing. And I little doubt but if punishments for grosser vices were more attempered to this principle, they would have much more effect. This hath been too much apprehended by the usurping god of this world; this engine he hath made it his business to turn, and manage to the contrary purpose, to drive or keep serious religion out of the world; yea, to make men ashamed of being sober, temperate, and regular in their conversation, lest they should also be thought religious, and to have any thing of the fear of God in them, and make them debauch, to save their reputation. A plain document to such as covet to see a reformation of manners in our days, what course ought to be endeavoured in order thereto. A great apprehension to this purpose that noble pagan[c] seems to have had, who inquiring whence legislation[d] had its rise, from some man or from God? and determining from God, if we will give the most righteous judgment that can be given; doth elsewhere write to this effect: that[e] Jupiter pitying the miseries of men, by their indulgence to vice, lest mankind should utterly perish, sent Mercury to implant in them, together with justice, shame, as the most effectual means to prevent the total ruin of the world.

And so inseparable is the connexion between being wicked and being miserable, that whatsoever molestation and uneasiness tends to extinguish dispositions to wickedness, ought to be reckoned given with very merciful intentions. It is no improbable discourse which an ingenious modern writer[f] hath to this purpose, (for I pretend not to give his words, not having the book now at hand,) that though the drowning of the world was great severity to them who did then inhabit it, yet it was an act of mercy to mankind. For hereby (he reckoned) the former more luxuriant fertility of the earth was so far reduced and checked, as not, so spontaneously, to afford nutriment to vice; that men in after-time must hereby be more constrained to labour and industry, and made more considerate, and capable of serious thoughts; and that when also they should find their time by this change of the state of the world naturally contracted within narrower limits, they would be more awakened to consider and mind any overtures should be, in following time, made to them in order to their attaining a better state in another world; and consequently the more susceptible of the Gospel, in the proper season thereof. If God were severe with so merciful intentions, what lies within the compass of these ministers of his justice, appointed for common good, ought certainly to be endeavoured; in imitation of him, whom they represent.

2. The administration of punitive justice, when the occasion requires it, tends also to the common good; as it may contribute towards the appeasing of God's anger against a sinful people, and the turning it away from them.

b Aquin. Sum. 1, 2dæ. q. 87. c Plato. d De Leg. Lib. 1. e In Protag. f Dr. Woodward's Essay.

What may be collected from that noble instance of Phinehas's heroical zeal, upon which a raging plague was stayed, compared with the effect which Ahab's humiliation and Nineveh's repentance had in averting temporal judgments, would signify not a little to this purpose. But I must pass to the

Second head of discourse proposed, *viz.* To argue and enforce from hence the duty incumbent upon all, under government, as their several stations and capacities can admit, to be, in due subordination, assisting and serviceable to the magistrate, as, in executing punitive justice, he is the minister of God for good. And this (as hath been said) is to be the use of the former part of the discourse, which will answer the design of the apostle's discourse, and agree to the natural order of the things discoursed in this context. For, The magistrate is the minister of God for good to us, is a doctrine; and, Let every soul be subject or subordinate to him, accordingly; an exhortation, which was at first proposed, and is afterwards resumed and pressed, ver. 5. as of absolute necessity from that doctrine. Wherefore 'tis necessary that we be, or we must needs be, subject. There is an ἀνάγκη put upon it, a cogent ineluctable necessity, arising even from hence, *viz.* from this doctrinal assertion as it is proposed, and as it is afterward applied to this purpose; we are not to be dispensed with in the case, but we must every one do our parts in subordination to the magistrate, and that not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. We shall therefore show,—1. What duty we who are in private capacities are exhorted to, and—2. Show the strength of the apostle's argument, as it is proposed in the text, and amplified in what follows, to engage us to that duty.

First, For the duty we are exhorted to, that we may understand what it is, I shall only premise some few plain things, and then leave it to yourselves to judge, and conclude what it is, and cannot but be.

1. It is plain, private persons are not to do the magistrate's part, are not to invade his office, nor usurp his authority; they are to act but in subordination to him, as their charge given them plainly imports.

2. They are not only not to oppose him. As the former would be too much, this would be too little; the arguments used to enforce it, import much more. What, because he is the minister of God for good, and to me, am I therefore only not to oppose him? Can it be thought there should be such an apparatus of argument, to draw from it so faint and dilute an inference? Ought not every man so far to reverence God's authority as to endeavour it may not lose its design? And ought not every man to co-operate to a common good, wherein each man claims a part?

3. It is not only to save myself from punishment, by not doing the evil which would expose me to the stroke of the sword; for my duty I am to do, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake, which plainly respects God and his authority and interest which I am to obey and serve. And I am to endeavour not only that he may not be a terror to me as an evil-doer, but that he may be a terror to them that are such.

4. Somewhat positive is manifestly carried in the word ὑποτασσέσθαι, to subject or subordinate myself to him, under this very notion, as the minister of God for good. Is this doing nothing? He is plainly said to be the minister of God for good, under this special notion, as he is the administrator of punitive justice, *viz.* as he bears the sword, and is to be a terror to evil-doers. I am so to subordinate myself, as that herein he may effectually serve the end of his office, and not bear the sword in vain. Now upon all this, judge you yourselves what is it that is left to be my duty in a private capacity, that is less than the magistrate's part, more than the mentioned negatives; and yet so much, as whereby I am to take care to my uttermost, that he may do good in his office of punishing wickedness? So as that his doing his duty must some way depend upon my doing mine, and be the effect of it, or of theirs who are in like circumstances, and so but under the same common obligation with me; so that ordinarily his duty cannot be done, without any care or concern of theirs or mine. What, I say, can it be less than to bring punishable matters under his cognizance? Otherwise, if no obligation lie upon private persons, to this purpose, he will only be to punish such wickedness as he beholds with his own eyes; and then how narrow will his precinct be! What multitudes of magistrates must there then be! And what a monster thereupon would the body politic become!

But here if any man ask me the question, (because what is to be done herein is to be done for conscience sake,) Am I bound in conscience to discover to a magistrate all the evil that I know by any man that is justly punishable by law? To this I shall only at present say, that cases of conscience can only be with judgment resolved in hypothesi, and with application to this or that person, when material circumstances, relating thereto, are distinctly known. I must have clear grounds if I will conceal such a man's punishable fault, upon which I may judge, that more good is likely to be done to his soul, that the honour of God and the public good will be more served by the concealment than by the discovery, and the government not hurt or endangered. But if the crime be such as is national, and imports contempt of God and his laws, and in reference whereto the offender expresses more shame of the punishment than of the fault, and I will yet, upon private respects, to him or myself, conceal it, I shall herein, while I pretend conscience in the case, cheat my conscience and not satisfy it. And I add in reference to this case, let any man that would exempt his conscience from any sense of obligation to endeavour the punishment of offenders in the mentioned kinds, take great care he do not ground his concealment upon other than very peculiar grounds, or not common to him with any other man in a like case. Is it because such a one is my friend? or he may bear me a grudge? or I may lose his custom, &c.? These are things so common, that guiding myself by such measures, is both to overthrow magistracy and conscience too. Upon the whole, therefore, what is ordinarily a private man's duty in such cases, is sufficiently evident. Therefore,

Secondly, Let us see the force of the apostle's arguings, to engage us to it.

1. That the magistrate, as he is the dispenser of punitive justice, is God's minister. 'Tis the authority of God that he is invested with, he bears a sword which God hath put into his hand. Is that authority to be eluded, and made to signify nothing? Is that sword to be borne in vain? What an awe should this lay upon our spirits? It is therefore to be served for conscience sake, which hath principal reference to God. We need not here dispute, whether human laws bind conscience; no doubt they do, when they have an antecedent reason, or goodness. If men command what God forbids, the apostles make their appeal to enemies, as judges whom they were to obey. He is the minister of God for good, not for hurt, or for no good; 'tis a perverting of God's authority, to do mischief by the pretence of it, a debasing it, to trifle with it. But the question is out of doors, when human laws are but subsidiary to divine, and enjoin the same thing. And as that celebrated saying of St. Austin is applied, by him, to the former case of a supposed contradiction of the pro-consul's command to the emperor's for disobeying the inferior; 'tis equally applicable, as fortifying the obligation to obey both, when they are coincident.

And this consideration can be insignificant with none, but such as say in their hearts there is no God, that think this world hath no universal sovereign Ruler, or no Lord over it; and it might as well be supposed to have no intelligent Maker, to have become what it is by chance; an imagination which the most vicious, that make any use of thoughts, begin to be ashamed of; and have therefore thought fit to quit the absurd name of atheist for the more accountable, as well as more convenient, name of deist. But then it's strange they should not see the consequence from Maker, to Ruler, and from God's having made this world, to its being under his present government, and liable to his future judgment; or that from any just apprehension of the nature of God, they should not collect so much of the nature of their own souls, as to judge them capable of subsisting out of these bodies, and in another world; and consequently of their being liable to a future judgment, for what they have been and done in this! Or that a being of so much wisdom and goodness, in conjunction with power, as to have made such a world as this, and such a creature as man in it; should not have made him for nobler ends, than are attainable in this world!

If any of themselves had power enough to make such another sort of creature, and furnish him with faculties capable of such acquisitions and attainments, only to fetch a few turns in the world, and form plots and projects in it, that must, with himself, shortly come to nothing; they would have little cause to boast of the performance: they would have cause to be ashamed of it, to use so unconceivable power only to play tricks, that neither themselves nor any one else should ever be the better for! And though they might, hereby, awhile amuse the world, they would gain little reputation of wisdom or goodness above other men, by being the authors of so useless a design, that would at length appear to have nothing of design in it; for finally it terminates in mere nothing. But the great God hath not left himself without witness, the illustrious characters of his Godhead shine every where. He doth insist upon, and will assert his rights, in this lower world; 'tis a part of his creation, though a meaner part; he rules in the kingdoms of men, and he that rules will judge. The jests and laughter of fools will not overturn his throne; they that have taught themselves to turn his laws, and the whole frame of his government over the world, into ridicule, (because 'tis to be hoped they do not use to laugh always,) should be advised by a wise and great man in his time, than to judge of their jest, when they have done laughing;[f] sometime they will have done, and shall consider that he, to whom it belongs, will judge over their heads, as he will over us all.

And if his throne and government are as insolently as they are vainly attempted against by many, and the most connive; we shall all be taken for a combination of rebels against our rightful Lord. It will be a heavy addition to be partakers of other men's sins, when every one hath more than enough of his own. Let me ask, would you not dread to be found guilty of misprision of treason, against the government under which we live? Why doth the fear of the great God, and the dread of being found accomplices against him, signify less with us? And what means it, that the charge of punishing great offenders is given to the community; thou, every individual, as in the text; thee, all the individuals making up the community; Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live, Exod. xxii. 18. And so for the idolater, Thou shalt bring forth that man or woman, and stone him, Deut. xiii. 13, 14. ch. xvii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Is it that all the people were magistrates? No, but that it was not to be supposed that so horrid impieties could long escape unpunished, but by the people's, as well as the magistrate's neglect; upon which all would be taken as conspirators against the great Lord of all.

2. Take the other part of the argument, that the magistrate is God's minister, (for good to us,) is it enough for us not to hinder? Are we not all obliged, in our stations, to promote our own, our neighbour's, and the common good? Our own, as we keep ourselves from being accessaries. Our neighbour's offending, as we contribute our endeavour that they may be less wicked and (which we should further design) that they may become good. Our unoffending neighbours, for if grosser wickedness rule without control, who that are pious, sober, and virtuous, can long live in peace, by such ill neighbours? We are for this directed to pray, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. for rulers, even all that are in authority, that we may live peaceable and quiet lives, in all godliness and honesty. And what we are to pray for, we do that ludicrously, if we endeavour it not too. Besides that the untainted, as yet, are liable to worse hurt, by the contagion of their example; and the common good is many ways to be served, as hath been shown. How laudable an excellency, among noble-minded pagans, was love to their country! And even in this way to serve the common good, was reckoned by them a praiseworthy thing. He (saith one of them) that doth no harm, is honourable; but he is worthy of double honour that prevents it; and he that assists the magistrate in punishing it, is most honourable, and far excels all his other citizens.[h] So far were they from thinking it an ignominious thing, to bring offenders to punishment, and especially for impieties, or whatsoever signified a contempt of religion; such regard they had to the honour of their gods, who were no gods. Shall we reckon the true and living God to deserve from us less regard to his violated honour? The common good, which in this way we are to promote, is so common, as all good men can, without scruple, concur in the design, and blessed be God, they so generally do so. We have the greatest encouragement hereto, by considering the immediate fountain of the magistrate's power, and office, our glorious and ever blessed Redeemer, and Lord; to whom all power is given in heaven and earth, by whom kings reign, who is head of all things to the church; and through whom the divine goodness flows towards a lost world. This infers an obligation upon all, that bear the Christian name, to serve the proper ends of this branch of his power; as they have in general, to acknowledge him for Lord and Christ.

They who therefore make it their business to promote this design, do not herein serve the interest of a party, but the interest of the universal Ruler of our blessed Redeemer, and of mankind. And they who are agreed, with sincere minds, upon so great and important an end, as the serving this most comprehensive interest, are agreed in a greater thing than they can differ in. To differ about a ceremony or two, or a set of words, is but a trifle, compared with being agreed in absolute devotedness to God and Christ, and in a design, as far as in them lies, of doing good to all. An agreement in substantial godliness, and Christianity, in humility, meekness, self-denial, in singleness of heart, benignity, charity, entire love to sincere Christians, as such, in universal love to mankind, and in a design of doing all the good we can in the world, (notwithstanding such go under different denominations, and do differ in so minute things,) is the most valuable agreement that can be, among Christians. They that are thus agreed, are more one, and do less differ in the temper and complexion of their minds from one another, than they who are never so much agreed in being for or against this or that external form or mode of religion; but are full of envy, wrath, malice, bitterness, falsehood, do differ from them all, and from all good men. And I doubt not, when God's time comes of favouring Zion, we shall have churches constituted, by congregating what is of one kind, such as (for the main) are of one mind, spirit, character, and temper; and serving whatsoever is of a different kind, and quite alien hereto; and cease to have them constituted by what is unnecessary, much less by what is inconsistent with their very being. Pride, ambition, vain-glory, and a terrene spirit, with carnal self-design, will not always prevent this. Heaven will grow too big for this earth! And the powers of the world to come, for those of this present evil world.

In the mean time let us draw as near one another as we can, and particularly unite in the most vigorous endeavour of carrying on this excellent design, which is now before us. And let it be with a temper of mind agreeing with God's kind design towards men, in appointing the magistrate to be his minister to them, *i. e.* for the doing them good. Let it be with minds full of all goodness, in conformity to the original first good, from whom, as such, this constitution proceeds. Despond not, as apprehending the stream is too strong, and there is no good to be done. That is to yield the day to victorious wickedness. It is to give vice the legislature, to let it be the law of the age, and govern the world: and it is to give up ourselves and our nation to perish as a lost people. Let us not be lost before we are lost. Much good hath been done in this kind heretofore. There was a time when (at Antioch) the severity of the magistrate was much regretted in the reign of that great prince Theodosius, and upon an ill occasion, the contemptuous subversion of his statutes. This cost Chrysostom divers orations or sermons to the people while yet presbyter there; in one whereof he asks them, what hurt had the terror of the magistrates done them? It hath shaken off our sloth, made us more honest, diligent, industrious.[i] He had told them above, and tells them after, they ought to give God thanks for it, that now there was not one drunken person, or one that sang lascivious songs, to be seen. Their city was become as a chaste matron, where great wantonness before did generally appear. Your experience hath told you, much hath been done, you are still getting ground; God hath, we are to hope, effectually

f Lord Verulam's Instaur. Mag.
h Plat. de Leg. lib. 5. συγκολαζων τοις αρχουσι.

i Hom. 6. ανδριαντων.

engaged the government in this blessed design; in subordination thereto, go on with alacrity.

Let me finally set before your eyes the instructive practice of that excellent prince Jehoshaphat, in a like case, 2 Chron. xix. when he was bringing back the people to the Lord God of their fathers, *v.* 4. And had set judges in the land, warning them to take heed, as being to judge not for men, but for the Lord, *v.* 6. which showed they were not mere matters of *Meum* and *Tuum* only, they were to judge in, but matters immediately relating to the interest and honour of God, for he distinguishes the judgment of the Lord, and controversies, *v.* 8. He charges all to whom he spake, as they were severally concerned, (and they were not concerned all alike,) to do their work, *v.* 9. in the fear of the Lord faithfully and with a perfect heart; and concludes as I do, with these words, *v.* 11. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good.

A TWO-FOLD DISCOURSE.

First.—OF MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD.

Secondly.—OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

COLOSSIANS I. 21.

AND YOU, THAT WERE SOMETIME ALIENATED AND ENEMIES IN YOUR MIND BY WICKED WORKS, YET NOW HATH HE RECONCILED.

It is a great and wonderful context, whereof these words are a part, which the time will not allow me to look into; but presently to fall on the consideration of the words themselves, which briefly represent to us, the wretched and horrid state of men, yet unconverted and not brought home to God; and the happy state of those that are reduced, and brought home to him. The former in those words, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." The latter, in these words, "Yet now hath he reconciled." I shall apply my discourse to the former part of the words, and thence observe,—that men in their unconverted state, are alienated from God, and enemies to him by their wicked works. This I shall endeavour,—1. To explain, and show you the meaning of it;—2. To evince, and let you see the truth of it;—3. Apply it.

1. For the meaning of it, 'tis evident that it is the unconverted state of man that is here reflected upon and referred unto. You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works. They were so, before they were turned to God; he writes to those Colossians as to converts, to them that were saints, and faithful brethren in Christ, (*v.* 2.) to them that were now believers in Christ, and lovers of the saints, (*v.* 4.) telling them, they sometime had been enemies by wicked works. Before conversion, they had (as is elsewhere said) their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God; walking as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Ephes. iv. 18. compared with the preceding verse. This is the deplorable condition of the unconverted world, they are alienated from, and enemies to, God by wicked works. We are to consider what this *alienation* from God doth import. It signifies estrangement, unacquaintance with God; and that without any inclination towards him, or disposition to seek his acquaintance. The word is emphatical, it signifies people of another country, you were like people of another country. Of such a different language, manners, and behaviour they that are converted are to you, and you to them; you are estranged to their speech, customs, and ways. All that is of God was strange to you, men in their unconverted state are strangers to God. Wicked men do not understand the words of the Gospel, John viii. 43. What relates to the kingdom of God, the unconverted man dislikes, Job xxi. 14. They say to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Man, who was originally made for the service of God, and communion with him, is now so degenerated, that he is become a mere stranger to him. The next word to be taken notice of, is *enemies*, which may seem to add somewhat to the former word, alienated; there is not only no inclination towards God, but there is a disinclination; not only no affection, but a disaffection. The carnal mind is enmity to God, and the effects of this enmity are obvious. This alienation from God is voluntary, affected, and chosen: men, in their unconverted state, are not only strangers to God, but enemies against God, and that in their minds. A most fearful case, full of astonishment, that the very mind of man, the offspring of God, the paternal mind, as a heathen called him, that this most excellent part or power belonging to the nature of man, should be poisoned with malignity, and envenomed with enmity against the glorious, ever-blessed God! that the mind of man, his thinking power, the fountain of thoughts, should be set against God, who gave him this power to think! Yet into this reason must every man's unacquaintance with God be resolved, they know not God, and converse not with him, only because they have no mind to it. That noble faculty in man, that resembles the nature of God, is turned off from him, and set on vain things that cannot profit; as also upon wicked and impure things, that render them more unlike to God, and disaffected to him. *By wicked works*, which must have a double reference: 1. Former wicked works, as done by them: 2. Future wicked works, as resolved on by them.

1. The former wicked works, which they have done, have more and more habituated their souls unto a state of distance from God. The longer they live, the longer they sin; and the longer they sin, the more they are confirmed in their enmity against God.

2. Future wicked works, as resolved on to be done. They purpose to live as they have done, and give themselves the same liberty in sin as before, and will not know God, or be acquainted with him, lest they should be drawn off from their resolved sinful course. For the knowledge of God and a course of sin are inconsistent things, 1 Cor. xv. 34. Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God. This is the condemnation, (John iii. 19.) that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They hate the light, because they will not have their

course altered, they resolve to do as they have done, and that light, which brings with it a tendency to the obeying of God, they cannot endure. But then, as this alienation of mind and enmity are against the light that reveals God, they finally terminate on the blessed God himself: as God is the term of reconciliation, so he is the term of this enmity and alienation. Wicked men look on God with enmity of mind, under several notions.

1. As he claims to be their Owner, when he claims a principal propriety in them, when he insists on his right in them as their Creator, as having made them out of nothing. When God owns or claims them as their Lord, that first signifies he is their Proprietor, or one to whom they belong; but they say they are their own. If we have to do with God, we must quit claim to ourselves, and look on God as our Owner; but this is fixed in the hearts of men, We will be our own; we will not consent to the claim which God makes to us. Our tongues are our own, Psal. xii. 4. Wicked men might as well say the same thing of their whole selves, our bodies, strength, time, parts, &c. are our own, and who is Lord over us?

2. If you consider God under the notion of a Ruler, as well as an Owner. Why should not God rule over and govern his own? But this, the spirit of man can by no means comport withal, though 'tis but reasonable, that he who gave men their beings, should give them laws; and that he who gave life, should also give the rule of life; but this man, in his degenerate state, will by no means admit of. There are two things considerable in the will of God, which the mind of man cannot comply withal. The sovereignty and the holiness of it.

1. The sovereignty of God's will. We must look on God's will as absolutely sovereign, man must look on God's will to be above his will; so as that man must cross his own will, to comport with a higher will than his. But this apostatized man will not do, and therefore he is at enmity with God; he will not submit to the will of God, as superior to his will. And then,

2. There is the holiness of God's will. His law is a holy law; and the renewed man therefore loves it; but because 'tis holy therefore the unregenerate man dislikes it.

3. Lastly, God is considered under the notion of our end, our last end, as he is to be glorified and enjoyed by us. There is a disaffection to God in the hearts of unregenerate men in this regard also. The spirit of man is opposite to living to the glory of God, every one sets up for himself; I will be my own end, it shall be the business of my whole life to please myself. Therefore when God is represented as our end, as in the 1 Cor. x. 31. Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God; and as it is in the 2 Cor. v. 15. No man is to live to himself, &c.—The great design of our being delivered from the law, (*viz.* as a cursing, condemning law) is that we may live to God, (Gal. ii. 19.) I am dead to the law, that I might live to God; this the unrenewed heart cannot comport with. The last and great design of all our actions must terminate on God; now self is set up, as the great idol in opposition to God, all the world over; and the spirits of men grow, by custom, more and more disaffected to God, in this respect. Again, God would be owned by us for our best good. This should be the sense of our souls towards him, so it was with the Psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee, &c. but says the unregenerate soul, the world is better to me than God. And it is upon this account that when overtures are made of changing this state, the unregenerate mind opposes it. Thus have you this doctrine explained and opened. I come now in the

2nd place, To evince the truth of this doctrine, and that by two heads of arguments,—Partly from ourselves, and partly from God.

1. From ourselves, 'Tis an alienation and enmity of mind that keeps men off from God, and reconciliation with him; which will plainly appear,

1. If we consider that our minds are capable of knowing God. Such a thing is the mind of man, which was originally made for such an exercise, as to be taken up, principally, with things relating to God. Our minds can apprehend what is meant by the nature of God, as a Being of uncreated perfection, in whom all power, wisdom, and goodness do meet; who fills heaven and earth, and from everlasting was God. Our minds tell us, that we have a capacity thus to conceive of God; 'tis in the capacity of man's nature to mind God, as well as to mind vanity; but doth it not. And whence doth this proceed, but from enmity, an alienation of the mind from God?

2. This appears, in that men are wilfully ignorant of God, and are destitute of the knowledge of him out of choice; ignorant, and are willing to be so. This speaks enmity and alienation of mind more expressly and fully. That they are capable of knowing God, and yet are ignorant of him, leaves no other cause assignable; but their desiring so to be, plainly assigns this cause, Rom. i. 28. They liked not to retain God in their knowledge. 'Tis not grateful to them, Job xxi. 14. We desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Men are ignorant willingly of that God, who made the world, and all things therein, 2 Pet. iii. 5. For this they are willingly ignorant of, &c. They will not know God, though his visible works show his invisible power and Godhead, Rom. i. 19, 20. Now this can signify nothing but alienation, and enmity of mind. Men are willing and industrious to know other things, and labour after the knowledge of them; but they decline the knowledge of God, and his ways, being alienated from God, through the blindness of their hearts, Eph. iv. 18. This heart-blindness is chosen and voluntary blindness, signifies their having no mind or will to things of that nature. But now the voluntariness of this ignorance of God, and the enmity that is consequently in it, appears evidently in two sorts of persons.

1. In many that are of the more knowing and inquisitive sort, who do all they can to make themselves notional atheists; to blot or rase the notion of God out of their minds. Of them I shall say little; here, they do their utmost, but in vain; it will stick as close to them as their thinking power. But their attempt shows their enmity, for they are content to admit the grossest absurdities into their minds, rather than permit that notion to remain unmolested there; rather imagine such a curious frame of things, as this world is, to have come by chance; than that it had a wise, just, holy, as well as powerful maker. They would count it an absurdity, even unto madness, to think the exquisite picture of a man or a tree to have happened by chance; and can allow themselves to be so absurd, as to think a man himself or a tree to be casual productions. Is not this the height of enmity?

2. In the unthinking generality. Of whom, yet unconverted out of the state of apostacy, 'tis said they are fools, as is the usual language of Scripture, concerning wicked or unconverted men; and that such fools, though they never offer at saying in their minds, much less with their mouths, yet they say in their hearts, no God; *i. e.* not there is none, for there is no *is* in the Hebrew text. The words may rather go in the optative form, than the indictive, O that there were none! The notion is let alone, while it reaches not their hearts; if it do, they only wish it were otherwise. This speaks their enmity the more, for the notion lays a continual testimony against the bent of their hearts, and constant practice, that while they own a God, they never fear nor love him accordingly. And they grossly misrepresent him, sometimes as all made up of mercy without justice or holiness; and so think they need no reconciliation to him, he and they are well agreed already. Sometimes think of him as merciless, and irreconcileable; and therefore never look after being reconciled to him.

3. It appears hence, that men do seldom think of God, when as a thought of God may be as soon thought as any other, and would cost us as little. Why not as well on God as upon any of those vanities about which they are commonly employed? 'Tis a wonderful thing to consider, how man is capable of forming a thought! how a thought arises in our minds! And how sad is it to consider, that though God hath given to man a thinking power, yet he will not think of him! God hath given to man a mind that can think, and think on him, as well as on any thing else. My body cannot think, if my mind and spirit is gone; though God gave man the power of thought, yet men will not use or employ their thoughts otherwise than about vain or forbidden things. God forms the spirit of man within him, hath put an immortal spirit into him, whence a spring

of thoughts might ascend heavenwards. When we have thousands of objects to choose of, we think of any thing rather than God! and not only turn this way or that, besides him, but tend continually downwards in opposition to him. Yea, men cannot endure to be put in mind of God, the serious mention of his name is distasteful. Whence can this proceed, that a thought of God cast in, is thrown out, as fire from one's bosom? whence is it, but from the enmity of mind that is in man against God?

4. It further appears hence, that men are so little concerned about the favour of God. Whomsoever we love, we naturally value their love; but whether God be a friend or an enemy, it is all one to the unrenewed soul, if there be no sensible effects of his displeasure. The men of this world only value its favours, the favour of God they value not; whereas in his favour is life in the account of holy and good men, (Ps. xxx. 5.) yea, they judge his loving-kindness is better than life without it, Ps. lxiii. 3. When men shall go from day to day, without considering whether God hath a favour for them, or not; whether they are accepted or not, whether they have found grace in his eyes or not, &c. What doth this declare, but an enmity of mind, and alienation from God? If men had true love for God, it could not be, but they would greatly value his love.

5. That men do so little converse and walk with God, doth speak a fixed alienation of mind, and enmity against God. Walking with God includes knowing and minding him; but it adds all other motions of soul towards him, together with continuance, and approving ourselves to him, therein. Now agreement is required to walk with God, (Amos iii. 3.) Can two walk together unless they be agreed? Hos. iii. 3. Men walk not with God, because they are not come to an agreement with him; God's agreement with us, and ours with him, is that we may walk together. It we walk not with God, it is because there is no agreement; and what doth that import, but an alienation of mind from God? Says God, I would not have you live in the world at so great a distance from me, I would walk with you and have you walk with me; and for this end I would come to an agreement with you. But sinners will not come to any agreement with God, and thence it comes to pass that they walk not with God; they begin the day without God, walk all the day long without God, lie down at night without God, and the reason is because there are no agreement, and that denotes enmity, especially considering,

6. That daily converse with God would cost us nothing. To have any man's thoughts full of heaven, and full of holy fear, and reverence of God, &c. (which is included in walking with God,) what inconvenience is in this, what business will this hinder? When a man goes about his ordinary affairs, will it do any hurt to take God with him? No business will go on the worse for it, it will not detract from the success of our affairs. 1 Cor. vii. 24. Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. Let your state be what it will, there can be no business in this world, but what you may do with God, as well as without God, and much better.

7. Which makes the matter yet plainer, how uncomfortably do men live in this world, by reason of their distance from God, and unacquaintedness with him; Job xxxv. 10. But no one saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night: They choose rather to groan under their burdens alone, than to cry to God their Maker, as at the 9th verse of that chapter. When men will endure the greatest extremity, rather than apply themselves to God, what doth this resolve into but enmity against God?

8. That men do so universally disobey God, bespeaks alienation and enmity of mind. As obedience proceeds from love, so disobedience proceeds from enmity. And for this I shall only instance in two great precepts, wherein the mind and will of God is expressed which I mention, and insist upon (though briefly) as things that concern the constant and daily practice of every Christian—1. a course of prayer to God, in secret,—2. and having our conversation in heaven. How express are both of these precepts, in the same chapter; the former, Matt. vi. 6. the latter, ver. 19, 20, 21. Now consider, whether our disobedience to these two precepts do not discover great enmity in our hearts against God. What, to refuse to pray, and pour out our souls to him in secret; to refuse placing our treasure and our hearts in heaven; what doth this signify, but aversion, and a disaffected heart? Let us consider each of them severally and apart by itself. We are a Christian assembly, how should it startle us to be (any of us) convicted of enmity against God, under the Christian name, in two so plain cases?

1. For prayer, 'tis a charge laid upon all persons considered in their single and personal capacity, Matt. vi. 6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret. I fear that most of them, who bear the Christian name, carry the matter so, as if there were no such place in the Bible. When the mind and will of God is made known to us by his Son, who came out of his bosom, that he will be sought unto; and that not only publicly but secretly and daily; that as we are taught by our Lord himself, to pray for our daily bread, and the forgiveness of our daily trespasses, we are also to pray in secret, to him that sees in secret; can such commands be constantly neglected and disobeyed, and not signify the contrary bent of our will; especially when we consider, that it is enjoined us for our own good? It would be profane to say, What profit is it to us to call upon the almighty? but it is most justly to be said, what profit is it to the Almighty, that we call upon him? It is honourable to him, but very profitable to ourselves. If we know not how to pray in a corner, confessing our sins, and supplicating for mercy, we cannot but live miserable lives. When therefore this is not done, whence is it, but from an enmity of mind? To a friend we can unbosom ourselves, not to an enemy.

I might also enlarge upon family prayer, but if closet prayer were seriously minded, you that have families would not dare to neglect prayer with them too. But if either be performed with coldness and indifferency, it makes the matter worse, or more plainly bad; and shows it is not love, or any lively affection, that puts you upon praying, but a frightened conscience only. And a miserably mistaken, deluded one, that makes you think the God you pray to will be mocked or trifled with, or that he cannot perceive whether your heart be with him, or against him. And so instead of worshipping, or giving him honour in that performance, you reproach and affront him; and all this while, how vastly doth the temper of your mind disagree with the mind of God! I would, saith the blessed God, have a course of prayer run through the whole course of your lives; and all this that your hearts may be lifted up from earth to heaven, that your hearts may be in heaven every day, according to Matt. vi. 19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth; but treasures in heaven, &c. Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also. And so we are led to the other precept mentioned before.

2. As to a heavenly conversation, God would not have reasonable creatures, who have intelligent spirits about them, to grovel and crawl like worms in the dust of this lower world, as if they had no nobler sort of objects to converse with, than the things of this earth; nothing fitter for the contemplation, exercise, and enjoyment of an immortal mind. The saints are finally designed for an inheritance in light, (Col. i. 12.) and their thoughts and affections ought to be there beforehand, that they may become meet for that inheritance. Will it do a man any harm to have frequent forethoughts of the everlasting joy, purity, and bliss of the heavenly state? How joyous and pleasant must it be! And why are we called Christians, if he, who is our Lord and Teacher, revealing his mind to us, and expressly charging us to seek first the kingdom of God, to set our affections on the things above, &c. shall not be regarded? Why is not heaven every day in our thoughts, why will we lose the pleasure of a heavenly life, and exchange it for earthly care and trouble, or vanity, at the best? Why is it? No other reason can be given, but only an alienation of our minds from God.

9. Another argument to prove this alienation, and enmity against God, is the unsuccessfulness of the Gospel; which can be resolvable into nothing else, but such an enmity. The design of the Gospel is to bring us into a union with the Son of God, and to believe on him whom the Father hath sent. Christ seeks to gather in souls to God, but they will not be gathered. This is matter of fearful consideration, that when God is calling after men, by his

own Son, that there be so few that will come to him. How few are there that say, Give me Christ, or I am lost? none can reconcile me to God, but Christ? You are daily besought, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled, (2 Cor. v. 20.) but in vain! What doth this signify, but obstinate, invincible enmity?

2. Another head of arguments may be taken from several considerations, that we may have of God in this matter: whence it will appear, that nothing but enmity, on our parts, keeps us at that distance from God, as we generally are at. And consider to that purpose,

1. That God is the God of all grace, the fountain of goodness, the element of love. Why are men at that distance from him, who is goodness, and grace, and love itself? The reason is not on God's part, 1 John iv. 16. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. What can our so great distance from this God signify, from the most perfect, the most excellent goodness, but the most horrid kind, and the highest pitch of enmity? Did men apprehend this, what frightful monsters would they appear to themselves! This is not only a plain, but a terrible declaration of a most unaccountable enmity, on our part.

2. God is still pleased to continue our race on earth, a succession of men in this world, from age to age, made after his own image, with minds and spirits that are intelligent and immortal; which declares a strong propension in God towards such a sort of creatures, the inhabitants of this lower world, though degenerated, and fallen from him. Notwithstanding all their neglect of him, in former ages, yet new generations of men still spring up, capable of knowing and serving him, Prov. viii. 31. In the foreseen height of man's enmity, this was the steady bent of his mind towards them, to rejoice in the habitable parts of this earth, and to have his delights with the sons of men. Thus also in the 2 Chron. vi. 18. do we find Solomon in a rapture of admiration, on this account: But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth, &c. And the Psalmist, Ps. lxviii. 18. That gifts are given to the rebellious, (the most insolent of enemies,) that the Lord God might dwell among them. How admirable and unconceivable a wonder is this! The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and will he yet dwell with men on earth! And we yet find, notwithstanding God's great condescension, that there is still a distance; whence can this be, but from man's aversion, and enmity of mind against God? Thus are men still requiting God evil for his goodness; God will dwell with men on earth, but men will not dwell with him, nor admit of his dwelling with them; they say to him, Depart from us, Job xxi. 14. 'Tis thus, from age to age, and generation to generation, which shows God's goodness on his part, and the enmity on man's part. See to this purpose, Ps. xiv. and liii. the beginning of each.

3. Consider the forbearance of God towards you, while you are continually at mercy. With what patience doth he spare you, though your own hearts must tell you that you are offending creatures, and whom he can destroy in a moment! He spares you, that neglect him. He is not willing that you should perish, but come to the knowledge of the truth, that you may be saved; by which he calls and leads you to repentance, Rom. ii. 4. On God's part, here is a kind intention; but on man's part, nothing but persevering enmity.

4. Consider God's large and wonderful bounty towards the children of men in this world, and the design of it, Acts xvii. 25, 26. He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, that they might seek after him, Ps. lxviii. 19. He daily loadeth us with his benefits. He gives us all things richly to enjoy, Acts. xiv. 17. God leaves not himself without witness, that he doth men good. He gives men rain from heaven, when they want it; and, when unseasonable, he withholds it. 'Tis a great thing to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, (Ps. cvii. 42.) his wonderful works towards the children of men; to understand our mercies and comforts, and what their meaning and design is. By mercies to our outward man, God designs to draw our hearts and minds to himself. Mercies are bestowed on them that have the power of thought, to consider the end of all God's mercies; 'tis bespeaking, and seeking to win our hearts to himself, Hos. xi. 4. 'Tis drawing us with those cords of a man, with bands of love: which plainly shows what the case requires, that the minds and hearts of men are very averse, and alienated from him, and therefore need such drawing.

5. And that which is more than all the rest, is God's sending his Son into the world, to procure terms of peace for us, and then to treat with us thereupon; and that in him he is reconciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. v. 19. Doth not reconciliation suppose enmity, as here, and in the text: You that were enemies in your minds—yet hath he reconciled. As we have noted that on our parts our withstanding, and too commonly frustrating, its overtures, speaks enmity and obstinacy therein; so on his part those overtures themselves speak it too. Here is the greatest kindness and good-will on God's part, that can be conceived: but it supposes, what we are evincing, ill-will in us. Christ came to seek and save that which was lost. What a lost state was our state! what to be engaged in a war against him that made us! Wo to him that strives with his Maker, Isa. xlv. 9. Fallen man is little apprehensive of it now, if we continue unreconciled to the last, at death it will be understood what a lost state we are in. Upon this account it will then appear, but this was our state before, when it appeared not; in this state Christ pitied us, when we had no pity for ourselves. Christ came not into the world to save men only at the hour of their death, from hell; but to raise up to himself a willing people, that may serve and glorify God, in their life on earth. He is, for this purpose, intent on this reconciling design; and how earnest, how alluring were his solicitations, in the days of his flesh? Come to me all ye that are weary—He that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out. How pathetical his lamentations, for the unreconcileable! O that thou hadst known the things belonging to thy peace—And his blood was shed at last, as the blood of propitiation, of a reconciling sacrifice, to reconcile God's justice to us; and thereupon also, as in this context. Having made peace by the blood of his cross, (ver. 20.) to vanquish our enmity, to reconcile us who were enemies in our minds—ver. 21, 22.

6. Consider Christ sending, and continuing, from age to age, the Gospel in the world; the design whereof may be understood by the manifest import and substance of it, and by the titles given to it, as it reveals Christ, the Mediator, the Peace-maker, in his person, nature, offices, acts, sufferings, and performances. As it contains the great commands of repentances towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, with the promises of pardon, and eternal life, with whatsoever is requisite to our present good state God-ward, and our final blessedness in him, as also the various enforcements of such precepts, and confirmations of such promises, with copious explications of the one and the other. And as it is called, the ministry of reconciliation, 2 Cor. v. 18. The word wherein peace is preached, by Jesus Christ, Acts x. 36. The Gospel of peace, and of glad tidings, (Rom. x. 15.) as that very word Gospel signifies.

This Gospel was, in its clearer manifestation, at the fulness of time, introduced with great magnificence and solemnity into the world, as the law had been, by the ministry of angels. When the Son of righteousness, the light of the world, was arising, and dawning upon it; then did a multitude of the heavenly host appear, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men, Luke ii. 13, 14. But this Gospel is not a more express declaration of God's good-will towards men, than their deportment under it, their continuing to live as without God in the world, is of their ill-will, disaffection, and enmity against God.

7. And lastly, the strivings of the Spirit, in the hearts of ministers preaching the Gospel, and with the souls of men, to whom it is preached, show that there is a mighty enmity to be overcome.

1. God's giving forth his Spirit to ministers, enabling them to strive with sinners, to bring them to Christ according to the working of that power, which works in them mightily, Colos. i. ult. What need of such striving, but that there is a great enmity in the minds of people to be conquered and overcome? Sometimes we read of ministers of the Gospel weeping over souls, who, for their too intent minding of earthly things, are called enemies to the cross of Christ, Phil. iii. 18. Sometimes they are ready to

breathe out their own souls towards them, among whom they labour, 1 Thess. ii. 8. Sometimes represented as travailing in birth, with them that are committed to their charge, Gal. iv. 19. There are ministers, whose hearts are in pangs and agonies for the souls of sinners, when the things of God are too apparently neglected, and not regarded by them; and when they see destruction from the Almighty is not a terror to them; and while they visibly take the way that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death. They would, if possible, save them with fear, and pluck them as firebrands out of the fire; the fire of their own lusts, and fervent enmity against God, and godliness, and save them from his flaming wrath. Is all this unnecessary? and what makes it necessary, but that there is a counter-striving, an enmity working in the hearts of men, against the Spirit's striving in the ministry, to be overcome?

2. The Spirit also strives immediately with the souls of sinners, and pleads with them; sometimes as a Spirit of conviction, illumination, fear, and dread; sometimes as a Spirit of grace, wooing, and beseeching; and when his motions are not complied with, there are complaints of men's grieving, vexing, quenching, resisting the Spirit, Acts vii. 51. Which resistance implies continual striving. No striving but doth suppose an obstruction, and difficulty to be striven withal; there could be no resisting, if there were not counter-striving; and hereby despite is done to the Spirit of grace. O fearful aggravation! that such a Spirit is striven against! 'Tis the Spirit of grace, love, and goodness, the Spirit of all kindness, sweetness, and benignity, which a wicked man doth despite unto, Heb. x. 29. How vile and horrid a thing, to requite grace, love, and sweetness with spite? As if the sinner should say, Thou wouldst turn me to God, but I will not be turned! The blessed God says, Turn at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, Prov. i. 23. There are preventive insinuations, upon which, if we essay to turn, plentiful effusions of the Spirit may be hoped to ensue; for he is the Spirit of grace. When we draw back, and resist or slight those foregoing good motions of that holy Spirit; this is despiting him. And doth not this import enmity, in a high degree? That the Spirit needs strive so much, that it may be overcome, as with some, at his own pleasure, he doth; with others, in just displeasure, he strives no more, and so it is never overcome.

We come now to the application, wherein the subject would admit and require a very abundant enlargement, if we were not within necessary limits. Two things I shall take notice of, as very necessary to be remarked, and most amazingly strange and wonderful, by way of introduction to some further use.

1. That ever the spirit of man, a reasonable, intelligent being, God's own offspring, and whereto he is not only a Maker but a Parent, styled the Father of spirits, should be degenerated into so horrid, so unnatural a monster! What! to be a hater of God; the most excellent and all-comprehending good! and thy own Father! Hear, O heavens—and earth, saith the Lord, I have nourished, and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me, Isa. i. 2. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate! As if all the blessed inhabitants of that upper world should rather forsake their glorious mansions, leave heaven empty, and run back into their original nothing, than endure such a sight! An intelligent spirit, hating God, is the most frightful prodigy in universal nature! If all men's limbs were distorted, and their whole outer man transformed into the most hideous shapes, 'twere a trifle, in comparison with this deformity of thy soul.

2. That it should be thus, and they never regret, nor perceive it! What self-loathing creatures would men be could they see themselves! so as never to endure themselves, while they find they do not love God; but men are generally well pleased with themselves for all this. Though the case is so plain, they will not see it; when all the mentioned indications show it, they never charge or suspect themselves of such a thing as this enmity against God. God charges them, and doth he not know them? The pagan world, they are God-haters, (Rom. i. 30.) even with a hellish hatred, as the word there signifies. They that profess his name, are apt to admit this true of the Gentiles: but do we think our Lord Jesus did injuriously accuse the Jews too, that they had both seen and hated him and his Father? John xv. 24. How remote was it from a Jew, who boasted themselves God's peculiar people, to think himself a hater of God! And what were they, of whom he says by the prophet, My soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me, (which is pre-supposed,) Zech. xi. 8. and most justly, for can there be a more loathsome thing, than to abhor goodness itself? What the most perfect benignity! And those Cretians had received the Christian faith, whom the apostle exhorts Titus to rebuke sharply, that they might be sound in it; and of whom he says, that professing to know God, in works they denied him, being abominable, Tit. i. 16. Hence is our labour lost, in beseeching men to be reconciled in God, while they own no enmity. Since this matter is so evident, that this is the temper of the unconverted world God-ward, that they are alienated from him, and enemies in their minds towards him, by wicked works; it is then beyond all expression strange, that they never observe it in themselves, (as the toad is not offended at its own poisonous nature) and are hereupon apt to think that God observes it not, nor is displeased with them for it. It is strange they should not observe it in themselves, upon so manifold evidence. Do but recount with yourselves, and run over the several heads of evidence that have been given. Can you deny you have minds capable of knowing God? Cannot you conceive of wisdom, power, goodness, truth, justice, holiness, and that these may be, either more manifest, or in more excellent degrees, even among creatures, in some creatures more than in others; but that being, in which they are in the highest and most absolute perfection, must be of God? Can you deny that you have lived in great ignorance of God much of your time? that your ignorance was voluntary, having such means of knowing him, as you have had? that you have usually been thoughtless and unmindful of him, in your ordinary course? that the thoughts of him have been ungrateful, and very little welcome, or pleasant to you? that you have had little converse with him, little trust, reverence, delight, or expectation placed on him, as the object? that you have not been wont to concern him in your affairs, to consult him, to desire his concurrence? that you have not thought of approving yourself to him, in your designs and actions, but lived as without him in the world? That you have not designed the pleasing or obeying of him in the course of your conversation? that the Gospel, under which you have lived, hath had little effect upon you, to alter the temper of your spirits towards him? That if his Spirit hath sometimes awakened you, raised some fear, or some desires, now and then in your souls, you have suppressed, and stifled, and striven against such motions? Do not these things, together, discover an enmity against God, and the ways of God? And is it not strange you cannot see this, and perceive a disaffection to God, by all this, in yourselves? What is so near a man, as himself? Have you not in you a reflecting power? Know ye not your ownselves? as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Yea, generally, men never find fault with themselves, upon any such account; and consequently, think themselves, in such respects, very innocent in the sight of God, and think he finds no fault with them. Now these two things being premised, will make way for the following uses. We infer therefore,

1. That whereas it so evidently appears, that men are at enmity with God, it cannot but be consequent, that God is not well pleased with them. No one is well pleased to have another hate him. God discerns that, in the inward temper of men's minds, wherewith he is not well pleased; *viz.* this alienation of mind from him, this wicked enmity, that is so generally found in them. They are wont to make light of secret, internal sin; the ill posture of their minds they think a harmless, innocent thing. But this he remonstrates against, takes notice of with dislike and displeasure; and is counterworking this spirit of enmity, not only by his word, but by his Spirit of love, and power. Though he doth not testify his displeasure by flames and thunderbolts; yet he observes, and approves not the course and current of their thoughts and affections; though he permit them, sometimes without sensible rebuke, to run on long in their contempt of him; yet he declares it to be wickedness: The wicked have not God in all their thoughts,

Ps. x. 4. He expostulates about it, Wherefore do the wicked contemn God, v. 13. threatens them with hell, for their forgetting him, Ps. ix. 17. yet sinners are apt to conclude, that God doth not see, or disallow any thing of that kind, Ps. xciv. 7. How unapt are they to admit any conviction of heart-wickedness! though 'tis more than intimated to be destructive, Jer. iv. 14. 'Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayst be saved: *q. d.* thou art lost if thy heart be not purged. Yea, when it is so plain in itself, that enmity against God, which hath its seat in the heart, makes a man's soul a very hell, yet they seem to think themselves very innocent creatures, when they are as much devilized, as a mind, dwelling in flesh, can be! This is the common practical error and mistake men lie under, that they think God takes notice of no evil in them, but what other men can observe, and reproach them for. But he knows the inward bent and inclination of their minds and spirits; 'why else is he called the heart-searching God? and knows that this is the principal and most horrid wickedness, that is to be found among the children of men, an alienated mind from God, and the root of all the rest. The fountain of wickedness is within a man. Simon Magus's wickedness lay in his thought; it is said to him, Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee, Acts viii. 22. And when the prophet exhorts (as before) Jer. iv. 14. to wash the heart from wickedness, he adds, How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee? And our Saviour tells us, Out of the heart, first, proceed evil thoughts, and then all the other wickednesses after-mentioned; murders, adulteries, &c. Matt. xv. 19. And that enmity and alienation of mind, that turns off the whole current of a man's thoughts from God, is the original evil; and, by consequences, lets them loose to every thing else that offends him, and ruins themselves. Yet when their very hearts are such a hell of wickedness, (as what is more hellish than enmity against God,) they are notwithstanding wont to say, they have good hearts.

2. Hence see the absolute necessity of regeneration. A doctrine, at which most men do wonder, which our Saviour intimates, when he says, John iii. 7. Marvel not at it, *viz.* that I said you must be born again. But who may not now apprehend a necessity of being regenerate? what will become of thee, if thou diest with such a disaffected mind God-ward? Do but suppose your soul going out of the body, in this temper, full of disaffection towards the ever-blessed God, before whose bright glory and flaming majesty (to thee a consuming fire) thou must now appear; though most unwilling, and as full of horror and amazing dread! How will thine heart then meditate terror! and say within thee, "This is the God I could never love! whom I would never know! to whom I was always a willing stranger!" whose admirable grace never allured, or won my heart! who, in a day of grace, that is now over with me, offered me free pardon, and reconciliation; but I was never at leisure to regard it. The love of this world, which I might have known to be enmity against God, had otherwise engaged me. It hath been the constant language of my heart to him, Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways; I must now hear from him that just and terrible voice, even by the mouth of the only Redeemer and Saviour of sinners, Depart from me, I know thee not. And into how horrid society must I now go! The things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, more glorious things than ever entered into the heart, are all prepared for lovers of God. And for whom can everlasting fire be prepared, but for the devil and his angels, and such other accursed God-haters, as I have been? Matt. xxv. 41. Recollect yourselves, consider the present posture and temper of your souls, and what your way and course is. You care not to come nigh to God now, but love to live at a distance from him, through enmity against him, from whence proceeds your departing from him, and saying to him, Depart from us. But another day, you will have enough of departing from God; a wicked man's life is nothing else but a continual forsaking of God, or departing from him. I appeal to your own hearts, concerning the justice of that mentioned repartee: They say now to God, Depart from us, Job xxi. 14. and God will then say to them, Depart from me, Matt. xxv. 41. That man's soul must thus perish, that lives and dies at enmity with God. Regeneration slays this enmity, and implants in the soul divine love. Therefore we must be regenerate, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, John iii. 3, 5. A man must have a new heart and a new spirit created in him, in which heart and spirit the love of God is the reigning principle. And therefore I repeat to you, The things which eye hath not seen—and a crown of life are prepared, and promised to them that love him, 1 Cor. ii. 9. James i. 12. You may yourselves collect the rest.

3. Hence take notice of the seat and subject of this regeneration and change. It is the mind of man; for you are enemies in your minds by wicked works. We are to be renewed, in the spirits of our minds, (Ephes. iv. 23.) to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, &c. Rom. xii. 2. You that have not considered what regeneration is, I tell you, 'tis to have your minds altered and changed; that whereas you did not mind God or Christ, your minds being changed, you savour and delight in the things of God, Rom. viii. 5, 7. They that are after the flesh, savour the things of the flesh. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is the mind, therefore, not as speculative merely, but as practical, and active, that must be renewed. Inquire, therefore, what change do you find in your minds? Are you in mind and spirit more holy, spiritual, and serious? And are your minds more delightfully taken up with the things of God, than formerly? Till your minds are thus changed, they cannot be towards God; but will be perpetually full of enmity against God. You will only mind earthly things, (Phil. iii. 19, 20.) with the neglect of God, and heaven, and heavenly things. If ever the Gospel doth us good, it must be by the change of our minds.

4. And in the last place, hence understand the absolute necessity of reconciliation with God; because you have been alienated and enemies against him by wicked works. Regeneration cures in part your enmity, but makes no atonement for your guilt, in having been enemies; for this you need a reconciler that could satisfy for you. What will become of the man that is not reconciled to God? If you be God's enemy, can he be your friend? And if God be your enemy, he is the most terrible enemy. How can we lie down in peace, in an unreconciled state? or without knowing whether we are reconciled, or not? Let not the sun go down this day, and leave you at enmity with God. If you have fallen out with a man, the sun is not to go down on your wrath; and is your enmity against God a juster or more tolerable thing? O let not the sun go down before you have made your peace. And for your encouragement, consider that it is the office of the Son of God to reconcile you to him. He is the reconciler, the peace-maker, the maker up of breaches between God and man. He is, if you resist not, ready, by his Spirit, to remove the enmity that lies in your minds against God; and by his blood, he causes Divine justice to be at peace with you. If you find the former effect, that assures you of the latter. Bless God that he hath provided, and given you notice of such a reconciler, 2 Cor. v. 19. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Bless God that he hath sent and settled one among you, on this errand, to beseech you to be reconciled to God, *v.* 20. Blessed is the man, whose iniquities are forgiven; and blessed is the man who can say I was once an enemy, but now am I reconciled; formerly I saw no need of Christ, but now I cannot live without him. How fearful a thing will it be to die unreconciled to God, under a Gospel of reconciliation! while the voice of the Gospel of grace is calling upon you, Return and live; Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? beware of dying unreconciled, under such a Gospel. When you return hence, retire into a corner, and consider what a wicked enmity of mind you have had against God and Christ; and pray that you may be renewed, in the spirit of your mind, Eph. iv. 23. Let a holy resolution be taken up at last, (after many neglects,) as was by the poor distressed prodigal, after he had long lived a wandering life, (Luke xv. 18; and onward.) I will arise and go to my Father, &c. and you will find God a merciful Father, ready to receive you, and with joy. Oh the joyful meeting between a returning soul and a sin-pardoning God! When once your strangeness and your enmity are overcome, and you

are come into a state of amity and friendship with God; then will the rest of your time be pleasantly spent, in a holy, humble walking with God, under the conduct of grace, till you come eternally to enjoy him in glory.

OF

RECONCILIATION

BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

Col. i. 21.

And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.
Verse 22. *In the body of his flesh, through death, &c.*

We have, from the former words of this text, shown the fearful, horrid state of unconverted sinners; that as such they are alienated and enemies in their mind, by wicked works, and come now to show, from the words that follow, the blessed state of the converted. You now hath he reconciled, &c. Here is instance given of the happiest change that ever was made, in the case of sinful wretched creatures; and far above all our expectations, if we had not been told, that as far as the heavens are above the earth, so far, in the acts of mercy, are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, Isa. lv. 9. Otherwise, when we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion against him, that were alienated and enemies to him in their minds by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, Well, and what became of the business? how did it issue? what was the event? and would expect to hear, why fire came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them in a moment; or the earth opened, and swallowed them up quick. Yea, and if the matter were so reported to us, if we did hear fire and brimstone, flames and thunderbolts, immediately came down upon them, and destroyed them in a moment; who would not say, So I thought, who could expect other? But that it should be said, such as were alienated from God and his very enemies in their mind, by wicked works, those hath his own Son reconciled! into what a transport of wonder and praises would this cast any considering mind! with what amazement would it make us cry out, O what hath God wrought, what wonders can the power of Divine grace bring about! How unexpected, how surprising a thing is this! Especially when we also consider how this was brought to pass, the Son of God effected it in the body of his own flesh, through death. He died for it! rather than such impure venomous worms, and that were as weak and defenceless as they were vile and wicked, should at last suffer the dreadful consequences of so desperate and unequal a war against the Almighty; which could not be other than their own ruin, and eternal death; he chose himself to die for them. This is the strange amazing subject we have to consider; and we cannot but confess and consider it as a strange thing, if we were only told it as that which had fallen out, in some other country, in any remote part of the world, or in some other world. But when we understand, as for the former part, this is the common case of men on earth, and therefore that it was our own case, to have been alienated from God and enemies to him in our minds by wicked works; and as to the latter part, that to us the proposal and offer is made of being reconciled, in this strange way! in what agonies, in what consternation of spirit should we be, when we can with greatest certainty say the former; if we cannot say the latter! And if we can, in what a transport! in what raptures of admiration, joy, and praise, should we say it! Any of us who hath heard, or now reads these words, even me who was alienated, and an enemy in my mind, by wicked works, yet me now hath he reconciled! Can you say so? how should your heart leap, and spring within you, at the reciting of these words! And if you cannot as yet say this with particular application, and it does not therefore raise a present joy, yet it may beget hope in you; for think with yourself, if with some the matter hath been brought to this blessed issue, why may it not with me? and upon the one account, or the other, now set yourself seriously to consider these latter words. And that you may do so with the more advantage, take distinct notice of these two things, that are to be severally treated of.—1. Of this blessed work itself, brought about by your merciful and glorious Redeemer: reconciliation with God. "You hath he reconciled."—2. The wonderful way wherein he hath effected it: "In the body of his flesh, through death."

1. Consider this reconciliation itself. Which that we may do with just advantage, both to the truth and ourselves, we must take heed of too much narrowing so important a subject; but take it in its due extent and compass, as comprehending all that truly belongs to it; and so it must be understood to be mutual between God and us; and to include both our reconciliation to him, and his reconciliation to us. Thus the proper import of the word, the scope of the apostle's present discourse, and the nature of the thing, lead us to understand it. The word being used when two parties have been at variance, not only signifies the laying down of enmity on the one side, but to be received into grace and favour on the other; as might be shown of the original words, that are wont to be thus rendered, if it were needful, or at this time fit. But it sufficiently appears, in the common use of this way of speaking among ourselves. And if we consider the scope of the apostle's discourse, nothing can be more agreeable to it; which is manifestly to exalt and magnify Christ, first as Creator, affirming that all things visible and invisible were made by him, and for him, as ver. 16. And then afterwards, there having been a rupture and breach in the creation, by the apostacy and revolt of some creatures; others, also, being in an uncertain and mutable state, liable to a like failure and defection, he is further magnified, as the Reconciler of such as were thought fit to be restored, and the Establisher of such as stood, ver. 17. Now the representation of his performance, as a Reconciler, had been very imperfect, if he had designed therein only to signify a reconciliation, effected by him on one side, leaving the other unreconciled. And though it be true, that taking this reconciliation, in reference to the immediately foregoing words of this verse, you that were enemies, might seem to limit it to that one sense, as if it meant only reconciliation on our part, consisting in the laying down of our enmity; yet the following words, that show how this reconciliation is brought about in the body of his flesh through death, signify as much for the extending of it to the other reconciliation also; *viz.* on God's part towards us. For they plainly mean that this reconciliation is brought about by sacrifice, *viz.* by our Lord Jesus's offering himself upon the cross for us (as hereafter we shall have occasion more largely to show.) Now a sacrifice is offered to God only, not to men, and being for reconciliation, must principally, and in the first place, intend the reconciling of God to us; though it secondarily hath its great use, for the reconciling us to God also; as hereafter we shall show. And it is in the nature of the thing very evident; reconciliation supposing a difference and displeasure between two parties, as what hath been, it must include the agrement of both, as that which now is. A willingness to be reconciled there may be on one side, when there is none on the other, as it is often and long between God and men; but if there be actual reconciliation it is always mutual; unless the one party deceive, or impose upon the other, pretending to be reconciled when he is not; which, in the case between God and us, can never be; for neither can we deceive God, nor will he deceive us. Therefore we shall treat of both the parts of this reconciliation, of men to God, and of God to them.

1. Our reconciliation to God. And though that be proposed to be first insisted on, let none think it is therefore looked upon as deserving, or as being any way a cause of his reconciliation to us. For as our enmity and rebellion against him cannot do him real hurt, though it does him infinite wrong; so our love and obedience, though they are most due to him, can profit him nothing. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself; is it again to him, if we be righteous?

Job xxii. 2, 3. What givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit a son of man, *ch.* xxxv. 7, 8. But by neither can we do the one or other to him. It should therefore be far from us to imagine we can procure his favour or reconciliation, by any thing we can do. And know, sinner, he is before-hand with thee, in the offer of reconciliation and in real willingness to be reconciled; for his offer is most sincere. When, therefore, out of a state of enmity, thou art brought to love him, it is because he loved thee first, 1 John iv. 19. But take this aright, that thou mayst not deceive thyself, nor wrong him. Before our reconciliation to him, his Gospel truly speaks him reconcileable, and offering us reconciliation; when his offer is accepted and complied with, then his Gospel speaks him actually reconciled. His offer of reconciliation shows his compassion, which is love to the miserable; herein he is before-hand with them whom he finally saves, he loves them with this love while they yet hate him and are full of enmity against him. From this love it is that he is reconcileable to them, willing to forgive all their former enmity and rebellions; if yet they will be reconciled, and turn to him with their whole souls. And this he testifies to them in his Gospel; and hereby his Spirit, working in and by this Gospel of his grace, he overcomes them, conquers their enmity, and causes them to love him, whom before they hated. But this actual reconciliation is always accompanied with delight, which is love to the amiable, such as he hath now made lovely, by transforming them into his own image, who is love, 1 John iv. 16. This is friendly, complacential love, that freely converses and holds communion with the beloved, so that they dwell in him, and he in them, as in the same place.

It is profane, therefore, and an insolent presumption, for any to say, God is reconciled to me, he delights and takes pleasure in me, while they are unreconciled to him, and have hearts full of wicked enmity against him. They do even weary him with their words, when they say, Every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them, Mal. ii. 17. 'Tis an affront to his excellent Majesty, a reproach to his glorious holiness and the purity of his nature, a defiance to the justice of his government, to think him well pleased, when they persist in their rebellions against him; or that he will be reconciled to them, when this is still the temper and posture of their souls towards him. He is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him; he hates the workers of iniquity, Psal. v. 4, 5. Any such thought he will severely and terribly avenge. If any man bless himself in his heart, and say, I shall have peace when he walks in the imagination of his heart, God will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man, Deut. xxix. 19, 20. And it is, on the other hand, a wicked, provoking unbelief, a high affront to him, a giving him the lie, if one, really willing to be reconciled, do apprehend him irreconcileable, or say in his heart, God will never show me mercy. It is as much as to say that the word of his grace is nothing but deceit, and his whole Gospel is made up of falsehood. Therefore, though our reconciliation to him is no cause of his reconciliation to us, yet (according to the method which he hath settled, as most agreeable to his glorious majesty, to his pure holiness, his hatred of sin, the justice of his government, and the truth of his word) we cannot say he is actually reconciled to us, till we are reconciled to him. It may be said he pities us before, and is upon Gospel terms reconcileable to us, not that he delights in us, or is reconciled. And we may the better understand this, that our reconciliation is no cause of his reconciliation to us, though it go before it, inasmuch as he works both reconciliations, in and by his Christ; so the text speaks of both; You hath he reconciled—not we ourselves. And 2 Cor. v. 18. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ; but in this way, order, and method, that first he overcomes our enmity, changes our hearts, and turns them to him; then is reconciled to us, as believing in his Son, and accepts us in him, as the beloved one.

Hereupon therefore we are first to consider, and open to you, our reconciliation to God; which we shall consider and speak of, not merely by showing the very point wherein it lies; but more largely, by letting you see what it comprehends in the compass of it, or what belongs to it, and in what way it is brought about. We are indeed to consider that this, in the text, "you hath he reconciled," is an historical passage, signifying somewhat past, *a res gesta, a great thing* effected and done. Whereas therefore some have taken much pains (and not to ill purpose) to write histories of nature, and give account of natural productions; we may call this a history of grace, giving some account how this gracious production is effected, and wrought on the souls of men. And for you that are reconciled, it is but to repeat to you your own story, and show you what God hath done for your soul, in this blessed work. We might have carried the same notion backward, and in the former part have considered your case, as the history of a man's unregenerate state; but those days, I believe, you would rather should not be numbered amongst the months. We therefore go on, to consider what will be of a more grateful, as well as most useful remembrance to you; *viz.* how God hath dealt with you, in bringing about this happy change. And doing it, in some sort, in the way of a history, it will be the more suitable to put you in mind, in divers particulars, of the manner how it was wrought; it being useful, in historical relations, not only in short to say that such a thing was done, but more at large to relate how, and in what way it was done. Though yet we cannot certainly say, that the several things we shall mention, were all done in that order wherein we shall set them down; for God's method may vary, or not in every respect be the same, with every one he savingly works upon. But because there are several things to be spoken which cannot all be mentioned at once, or in one breath, and some order or other must be used in reciting them; we shall repeat them, not merely as they occur to our thoughts, but also as they more aptly lie in order to one another; not doubting but if you have been reconciled to God, you will say, when you hear them, these things have been wrought in you. Or if you have not, I must say, these are things you are to look after; and must at one time find in yourselves, if ever you shall be reconciled. And so his reconciliation hath begun with you, or must begin in,

1. A thorough conviction, with deep and inward sense, wrought into your hearts, of your former enmity. There must have been a charging oneself, particularly, with this matter of fact, I have been alienated from God, and an enemy to him in my mind; I see it, I confess it, thus it hath been with me, this hath been the temper of my soul, towards the blessed God! Here lies the great difficulty of reconciliation, on our part, that men are so hardly brought to see and own this; because they feel not an enmity boiling in their hearts against God, therefore they will not yield there is any such thing. But they might take notice, they as little feel love burning in their breasts toward him. And they the less apprehend the truth of their case in this respect, because by the same external show and appearance, by which they may deceive other men, they endeavour to cheat themselves too; that is, because they sometimes bear a part in the solemnities of God's worship, and sit in an assembly as his people, hear his word, and with their mouth (*ore tenus*, or in *outward appearance*) show much love, they therefore think all is well, though their heart run after their covetousness, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. But what can be said to that convictive query; How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me? when in reference to creatures it is required that love be without dissimulation, and that we love not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth: Will an outward appearance, and show of love, be sufficient towards the most amiable and most excellent One, the ever-blessed, heart-searching God? Let this be laid as a ground most firm and stable, that if the subject, thy soul, be capable, and the object, the ever-blessed God, be made known and set in view to the eye of the mind; if then there is not love towards him, there is hatred. What, can a reasonable soul be indifferent towards God! the all-comprehending Being! and with whom all have to do! the first and the continual Author of our life and being, whose invisible and eternal power are manifest in the visible things which he hath made; so that heaven and earth are full of his glory. To-

wards some remote foreign prince, multitudes may be void of love and hatred alike, of whom they have no notice, with whom they have no business. Can it be so with us towards God, who is God alone, besides whom there is no other, in whom all live, and move, and have their being, who is, therefore, not far from any one of us; and whom all are obliged to take for their God, and must, if they accept him not, be taken for refusers? A thing that carries with it most horrid guilt! and carries in it downright enmity; and the more heinous, when, with any, it is covered with lying lips, with the cloak of a profession, *viz.* that they have taken him for their God, when such as say that he is their God yet have not known him, as John viii. 54, 55. For that ignorance must proceed from enmity, a not liking to retain God in their knowledge, as Rom. i. 28. Of which ignorance from disaffection, if heathens might be guilty, as they were, the apostle there speaks of; much more deeply guilty are they, who being his professing people, yet know him not; as they were, whom our Lord so charges in the fore-cited John viii. 54, 55. For these hide their hatred with lying lips, which is much more an abomination to the Lord, Prov. x. 18. If you never so confidently pretend love to God, and he that knows all things says, I know you that you have not the love of God in you, as our Saviour tells the Jews; who is more likely to be mistaken? John v. 42. And can you be more confident, or more highly boast your relation to God, or your love to him, than they who were so peculiarly his people, chosen out from all nations? If you say you are lovers of God: and the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who searches hearts and reins, (Rev. ii. 18, 23.) says, I know you that you have not the love of God in you; how must it appal and dismay your hearts, to have his certain unerring judgment of you, thus to control your partial, self-flattering judgment; and if this be indeed the state of the case, with any of us, and he know it to be so, it is enough for our condemnation; but for our saving conviction it is necessary that we know it too: therefore let us search our own hearts, and try them impartially, by all the several evidences, and aggravations of enmity against God, in the foregoing discourse, from p. 939. to p. 942. And to all these, I add here some enlargement, upon what was more lightly touched, (as within the narrow limits of time, wherein that discourse was delivered, it could not be otherwise,) p. 940. 2. *viz.* disobedience to that plain, express command of our Lord: to lay up our treasure, not on earth, but in heaven, so as to have our hearts also there, Matt. vi. 19, 21. This I choose to insist upon, in reference to our present purpose, that where there is a remaining and a reigning enmity against God, there may be a thorough conviction of it, in order to reconciliation; both because as to this thing, the rule we are to judge by is so very plain in the word of God; and because the temper and bent of our own hearts, in this respect, is so easily discernible, to them that will diligently and faithfully observe themselves.

Scripture is most express herein, as in the place last mentioned, that they whose hearts are on earth, and not in heaven, have no treasure in heaven. And what can be a greater evidence of enmity to God, than to have the bent and tendency of your heart and spirit directly contrary to the mind of God concerning you, or to what he would have it be, and it must necessarily be, that you may not be lost, and miserable for ever? The enmity to him, which he so much resents, is not your designing any hurt or prejudice to him; but the contrariety of your temper to his kind and merciful design towards you. Therefore they that mind earthly things, that is, that savour them most, (as the word signifies,) and it must be understood as excluding the savour of better things, that is, who only savour them, and taste no pleasure or delight in spiritual or heavenly things; such are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ, *i. e.* to the design of his dying upon the cross, which was to procure for his redeemed a blessed state in heaven, and to bring them thither, not to plant and settle them here on earth. They are enemies therefore, because his design and theirs lie contrary, and oppose one another. He is all for having them to heaven, and was so intent upon that design, as not to shun dying upon a cross to effect it; they are all for an earthly felicity, and for a continual abode upon earth, to enjoy it. This is an opposition full of spite and enmity, to oppose him in a design of love, and upon which his heart was set with so much earnestness! Therefore is the carnal mind said to be at enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7. even as it is death, *v.* 6. But to whom? not to the blessed God himself, which you know is impossible, but to us. It is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be; for that is spiritual, *ch.* vii. 14. and the best on earth find themselves, in too great degree, carnal; and here lies the contrariety, much more when this carnality is total. And this law is the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, which directly tends to make us free from the law of sin and death; (*ch.* viii. 2.) which it doth when the Spirit of God prevails, and gets the victory over this carnality of mind, so that we come to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. In the mean time, they that are after the flesh, do only savour the things of the flesh; as they that after the Spirit, do the things of the Spirit, *v.* 5. And they that are after the flesh shall die, but they that by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh shall live, *v.* 13. Therefore we see the reason why it is above said, they that are in the flesh, or under a prevailing carnality, cannot please God; for he takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he should turn and live, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. You cannot please him, because the bent of your carnal mind lies cross to his saving design, you are enemies in your mind to him, for your mind is most opposite to his mind; he is for saving you, you are for self-destruction, you hate him, as you love death, Prov. viii. 36. Therefore also they that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them, 1 John ii. 15. He would have them do his will, and abide in a blessed state for ever; but while they love this world, their hearts are set upon a vanishing thing; for the world and the lust thereof must pass away and be gone, *v.* 17. They cannot love him, while in mind, and will, and design, they so little agree with him. And hereupon is the friendship of this world said to be enmity against God, and he that will be a friend of this world, makes himself an enemy to God, James iv. 4. The design of his amity with you is disappointed and lost, therefore he can look upon you no otherwise than as enemies to him.

And now, if this be the temper of your mind and spirit, how easily, by looking into your own hearts, might you discern it? Know you not your ownselves? 2 Cor. xiii. 5. As if it were said, it is a reproach to be ignorant or without this knowledge! What is so near you as yourselves? Do you not know your own minds? whether you had rather have your portion for ever on earth, or in heaven? whether you more value a heavenly treasure or the treasures of this earth? If you chiefly mind earthly things, how can you but know it? Do but take an account of yourselves, where are your hearts all the day from morning to night, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year? what thoughts, designs, cares, delights are they that usually fill your souls? are they not worldly, carnal, earthly? Trace your own hearts: how canst thou say, I am not polluted? see thy way, (Jer. ii. 23.) mark thy own footsteps, see what course thou hast held, years together, even under the Gospel; and when thou hast been so often warned, even by him who bought thee by his blood, to seek first the kingdom of heaven—to strive to enter in at the strait gate—and told how precious a thing thy soul is, even more worth than all the world; and how fearful a bargain thou wouldst have of it, if thou shouldst gain the whole world, and lose thy soul! And if all the neglects of his warnings and counsels have proceeded from the worldliness, earthliness, and carnality of thy heart and mind, and all this is declared to be enmity against God; then cast thyself down at his foot, and say to him, Now, Lord, I yield to conviction; I now perceive I have been alienated, and an enemy in my mind by wicked works, though I never suspected any such thing by myself before. And know that till then the Gospel of reconciliation will do thee no good, thou wilt never be the better for it, though thou livest under it all thy days; all exhortations to be reconciled to God, and to get this dreadful disease of enmity against God cured, will avail no more than physic, or a physician, to one that counts he is well, and feels himself not at all sick. All thy Redeemer's calls will sound in

thine ears, as if he called the righteous, and not a sinner to repentance. But that such calls might, or may yet signify the more, know that reconciliation not only comprehends a conviction of the fact, that thou hast been an enemy; but will also contain, in thy case, if ever thou be reconciled;

2. A clear and lively apprehension, with dread and horror, of the monstrous iniquity and wickedness thereof. This hath been or must be wrought in thee. And when thou art convicted in thy conscience of thy being an enemy to the ever-blessed God, how canst thou but see thyself to be a vile and wicked creature, upon this account? This is thy case, and thou must apprehend it accordingly, that thou art an enemy in thy mind, and by wicked works. For what can be more wicked, than to hate the God of thy life! even him who is love and goodness itself in highest perfection! What, to hate the God of all grace, he that is the Lord, the Lord gracious and merciful, abounding in loving-kindness goodness, and truth! Bethink thyself, make thy reflections, view the face of thy soul in the mirror of that most righteous law, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and might, and mind. And doth it not astonish thee to behold enmity filling up, in thy soul, the room and place of love! that thou findest thou hast, in thy soul, a power of thinking thoughts, but canst take no pleasure to think of God! Thou hast in thy nature a principle of love, and thou canst love thy friend, thy child, yea, thy money, and (what is worse) thy lust; but canst not love thy God! How fearful a case! that when thou hast a mind and spirit in thee, made up of reason and love, it should against all reason love things less lovely, as earth and vanity; yea even most hateful, as sin and iniquity; but cannot love its own Father, even him whose offspring it is, and to whom alone the title belongs of Father of spirits![a] How monstrous a deformity is this! How fearful a transformation of a reasonable, immortal mind and spirit! If thy body were wrested into never so horrid and hideous shapes, there were nothing, in point of horror, comparable to this deformedness of thy soul. Nor canst thou ever be reconciled to God, till there be unreconcileableness to thyself, as thou art in this state; and till thou be the most frightful, hateful spectacle to thyself, on this account. Thou wilt never look upon thy own carnal mind, or thy friendliness towards this world, which is declared to be enmity against God, (Rom. viii. 7. Jam. iv. 4) with a kind, self-indulgent eye any more; but as having in them the most amazing wickedness, such whereby a reasonable soul, an understanding mind and spirit, is brought to love a clod of clay, a lump of earth, yea even sin itself, rather than the ever-blessed and most holy God of heaven! Let no man ever think himself in a way of reconciliation to God, till he find in his soul a very deep sense of so hateful an evil as this; and have expressly charged himself with it, before the throne of the Most High. If you find there is a difficulty in it, and that your hearts are hardly brought to it, that they fly back and recoil, and will not yield that any thing so bad is to be charged upon them; take so much the more pains, labour and strive with them the more to bring them to it; because the whole business of your peace and reconciliation with God depends upon it. You can never be reconciled, till you see your not being so, or your continuing enmity is a thing not to be endured: that if thou couldst be truly charged with hating thy own father or mother, or wife or child, or thy prince or country; none of these, though monstrously bad, are by many degrees so ill things, as the hating of thy God.

Therefore since this charge cannot be denied, it must be aggravated upon thy own soul, till thou feel the weight and burden of it; and that now at length thou art brought to say, I cannot endure to dwell with myself, I cannot keep myself company, nor eat, or drink, or sleep, or converse with myself in peace, till my heart be changed, and the case be altered with me in this respect. If thou canst truly say, Christ hath reconciled thee, thus thou hast felt and found it, or thus thou wilt find it, if ever thy reconciliation be brought about.

3. You that are reconciled, may reflect and take notice of this, as a further very remarkable thing in your own story, that you have been made deeply sensible of your great sinfulness, in other respects. And for others, that are yet to be reconciled, know that this belongs to the reconciliation, which you are to endeavour and seek after, a deep sense of sin, in the full extent of it. As love is the fulfilling of the law, and is therefore to be considered, not in one single duty only, but as the spring and source of all other duty; so enmity is to be looked upon not as one single sin only, but as the spring and fountain of all other sin. Therefore when you are convinced, and made sensible of your enmity against God, you have been, or must be, led on, from this fountain to the several impure streams and rivulets issuing from it; and have a like conviction and sense of your sinfulness, in the larger extent and compass of it; and that in such respects, whereof slighter penitents take little notice. As for instance,

1. You have had or must have a sight and sense of sin as sin. Many apprehend little of it besides the sound of the word, and make a light matter of it. I am a sinner, is soon said, when it is little understood what sin is, or what it is to be a sinner. But you have, or must conceive of sin, as a violation of the holy law of God; an affront to the authority of your Maker and sovereign Lord, a setting of your own will above and against the supreme will of the Most High. Hereupon you must consider, if yet you have not, what a fearful thing it is to be a sinner, and say with yourself, "O what a monstrous vile wretch am I! that was nothing but the other day, and now being raised up into being a reasonable creature, capable of subjection to a law, to rise up in rebellion against him that gave me breath!" What, to contend against him who is thy life, and the length of thy days, how horrid must this be in thy eyes!

2. You must have a thorough conviction and sense of the sinfulness of your nature, as having been sinful from the womb, born in sin, conceived and brought forth in iniquity, Psal. lviii. 3. Psal. li. 5. Hence you are to bethink yourself, "What a loathsome creature have I been from my original! to have come into the world with a nature poisoned and envenomed with sin! What a wonder was it that the holy God would suffer me to breathe in the world so long, and feed and sustain me so many days!" Many may have some sense of wicked acts, that have no sense of the impurity of their natures. This should fill thee with confusion and self-abhorrence!

3. Of such sinful inclinations and actions, as were most directly against God. Many can be convinced of wrong done to a neighbour, that have no sense of their having wronged the God of their lives, by continual neglects of him, casting him out of their thoughts and hearts, and living as without God in the world; and as if they had been made to please and serve themselves, and not him.

4. But there must also be a deep sense too of sins against thy neighbour. For on the other hand, there are too many that are so taken up about the commands of the first table, as to overlook those of the second; that if they cannot be accused of gross idolatry, or of the neglect of God's external worship, think themselves very innocent, when in the mean time they live, as to their neighbours, in envy, hatred, malice, hateful, and hating one another; make no scruple of cozening or defrauding a neighbour for their own advantage, or of bearing him a grudge, of harbouring thoughts of revenge against him. Whereas we are plainly told, that if we forgive not our offending brother, neither will God forgive us; and are taught to pray for forgiveness to ourselves, but as we forgive others. And that he that hates his brother, abides in death, 1 John iii. 14. Yea, and that when the law of God requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, we are obliged not only not to harm him, but to do him all the good we can, as we have opportunity, and as we are able, when we see him in distress, to relieve and help him. Especially if we see him go on in a sinful course, to admonish and reprove him, with prudent friendliness, and not suffer sin upon him; otherwise thy righteous Judge will reckon that thou hatest him in thy heart, Lev. xix. 17.

a Some heathens have conceived of God, as the νους πατριος, the *paternal mind*, Hierocl. And so the apostle quotes a heathen poet, speaking of ourselves as God's offspring. And thereupon adds that the Godhead is not like silver and gold, whereas he is like our minds or spirits; whence he might collect how unreasonable it is not only to love silver and gold, which is unlike him, but even sin, which is most contrary and hateful to him.

5. And thou oughtest to be sensible too of sins against thyself. For when God's law requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, it implies there is a love which we owe to ourselves; not that inordinate self-love, which excludes both love to God and our neighbour; but such as is subordinate to the one, and co-ordinate with the other. Consider therefore, whether thou hast not been guilty of sinning against thyself: against thy body, in gluttony, drunkenness, fulfilling the lusts of it: against thy soul, in neglecting it, in famishing it, letting it pine and waste away in thy iniquities; in ignorance, worldliness, carnality, estrangedness from God, never looking after a Saviour for it, not using the appointed means of thy salvation. What multitudes live all their days in sin of this kind, and never accuse or blame themselves for it?

6. And you must labour to be sensible of all such sins against your neighbour, and yourselves, as sins, though not immediately or directly, yet principally against God himself; because he is the supreme Lawgiver, and 'tis he, who by his law hath settled that order in the world, which by such sins you have violated and broken. Therefore doth that great penitent thus accuse himself, in his humble confession to the great God: Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, (Psal. li. 4.) reflecting upon the transgressions, by which he had highly wronged Uriah, Bathsheba, and his own soul; because there is but one sovereign Lawgiver, (James iv. 12.) by whose authority only, either put forth immediately by himself, or derived to his vicegerents, all just laws are made, by which there comes to be any such thing as sin or duty in the world. Therefore you must charge yourself as having offended him, by all the sins that ever you were guilty of; though man was the object, God's law was the rule, sinned against.

7. You ought therefore to be sensible of secret sins, which he only knows; as well as open, and such as tend to bring reproach upon you amongst men.

8. And (amongst them) of the sins of your heart, and inward man, evil thoughts, designs, affections, inclinations; as well as of such as have broken forth into outward actions.

9. Of sinful omissions, as well as commissions; you must be sensible, not only of the evil which you have done, but the good that you might and ought to have done, which you have not done. The judgment of the great day, as it is represented, Matt. xxv. from ver. 31. to the end of the chapter, runs, you see, chiefly upon the omissions of the condemned, in opposition to the performances of them that are absolved, and adjudged to life everlasting. And before, in the same chapter, he that made no use of his one talent, is doomed unto utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth, under the name of an unprofitable servant, ver. 30. that is, a wicked and slothful servant, as he is called, ver. 26. For though, when we have done all we can, we are to count ourselves unprofitable servants, and to God we are so; yet we ought, and are capable, to be profitable to ourselves, and to other men; and to God we ought to be faithful servants, though we cannot be profitable. But will you count him a faithful servant, who can only plead for himself to his master; "I have not embezzled your goods, destroyed your cattle, or burnt your house;" when yet he never did him real service? If ever therefore you be reconciled to God, you will be or have been in bitter agonies of spirit before him, in the review of your former fruitless life, and that you have lived so long in the world to so little purpose!

10. You must have been, or will yet be, deeply affected with the sense of sins, not only against the holy, righteous law of God, but against the Gospel of his Son; not only that you have swerved from the rules which were given you, and neglected the ends you were made for, as you are God's creatures, and the work of his hands, thereby exposing yourselves to his wrath and justice; but that you have slighted the only remedy tendered you in the Gospel, neglected the great salvation that was wrought out, and began to be spoken by the Lord himself, Heb. ii. 3, 4. Consider, were you never in dread, did you never cry out affrighted, "How can I escape, who have neglected such a salvation, such a Saviour?" It must at one time or other cut and wound your souls to think how many serious warnings, earnest invitations, affectionate entreaties, heart-melting allurements, have I w'hstood! How often have I been besought, in the name of a crucified, dying Redeemer, to resign and surrender myself to him, to submit to his authority, to accept his mercy, and have refused! The heavy yoke and burden of sin and guilt have been more tolerable to me, than his easy yoke and light burden. I have more busied myself to increase my interest and share in this present world, than to gain a part in that fulness of grace, righteousness, spirit, and life, which is treasured up in him. Your reconciliation can never be brought about, but upon a heart-wounding sense of your being so long unreconciled, and your having disregarded the great and merciful Reconciler.

4. If Christ hath brought about, in you, a thorough reconciliation to God, this further belongs to the story of his dealings with you, as that which he hath given you to experience; or if he have not yet reconciled you, 'tis that which, if ever you be reconciled, you are yet to expect; *viz.* a deep inward apprehension and sense both of the dreadfulness and dueness of divine displeasure towards you, for your former enmity against him, and for all the other wickedness that hath accompanied it.

1. Of the dreadfulness of his displeasure. You could no longer make light of it, or eat and drink and sleep in quiet, and give yourself the liberty of mirth and jollity, while you still lay under it. God is said to be angry with the wicked every day, Ps. vii. 11. and to hate all the workers of iniquity, Ps. v. 5. You will count it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he saith, vengeance belongs to him, and he will repay it, Heb. v. 30, 31. And when you have reason to apprehend him, as lifting up his hand to heaven, and saying, I live for ever; as whetting the glittering sword, and his hand taking hold of vengeance, Deut. xxxii. 40, 41. You must have thought, or will yet think with yourself, who knows the power of his anger! Ps. xc. 11. And by how much the less you can know it, so much the more you must have dreaded it. For all the while you have been abusing his patience, long-suffering, and forbearance, not considering that the goodness of God did lead you to repentance; so long as you were despising the riches of his goodness, you were treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment, Rom. ii. 4, 5. And to have treasures of unknown wrath, far beyond what you could conceive, laying up in store against you, how amazing must this be to you! Destruction from the Almighty! What a terror must that be to you! Job xxxi. 23. To eat and drink under wrath! to buy and sell, to plough and sow, and all under wrath! and with a curse from God, covering you as a garment, cleaving to you as a girdle, flowing as oil into your bones, mingling with all your affairs, and all your comforts, with whatsoever you do, and whatsoever you enjoy! And to be, all the while, upon the brink of eternity, and not, for ought you know, to have a hand-breadth, not more than a breath, between you and eternal woes and flames, and none to deliver you from the wrath to come! This cannot have been an easy condition, and the less when you considered,

2. The dueness of God's wrath and displeasure unto you; that how terrible soever it is, 'tis all most justly deserved. You must have been made to see and say, "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, did most righteously belong to me, as my most proper portion; to me, an enemy to the God of my life, who gave me breath and being, upon the treasures of whose bounty I have lived all my days; to whom, when he filled my house with good things, yet I often in my heart said, Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14, 15. And as the law of love to God, the great original law, had engaged me to keep all his other commandments, so my enmity against him, hath made me break them all; so that I have lived a life of disobedience and rebellion all my time thus far. And though he hath offered me terms of peace, and I have been often earnestly besought, by those that have spoken to me in Christ's stead, (my bleeding, dying Redeemer and Lord,) to be reconciled to God; yet I have hitherto borne toward him an impenitent, implacable heart. If there were ten thousand hells, they were all due to me, I have deserved them all.

5. Such as have been reconciled, have been brought, by believing, to apprehend God's reconcileableness to them, in and by his own Son. This also belongs to the history of God's dispensation towards them, and may instruct others, by letting them know what must be wrought in them, that they may be reconciled. It is their special advantage, that live under the Gospel, that therein they behold God reconciling the world to himself, by Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. This is the sum of the Gospel, that God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have life everlasting, John iii. 16. Hereby they may know and believe the love God hath to them, 1 John iv. 16. And that, though they have been alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet he is not irreconcileable. This is the Gospel of the grace of God, which he testifies and they are to believe, unless they will make him a liar, 1 John v. 10. And therefore notwithstanding the sense they ought to have of their having been enemies, and of the horrid wickedness hereof, and of their sinful temper and course in all other respects, together with the terrors of God's wrath, and their desert of it to the uttermost; they are yet to conjoin therewith, the belief of his willingness to be reconciled. And hereby he melts and breaks their hearts, *viz.* by this discovery of his good-will, believed; for disbelieved, it can signify nothing, nor have any effect upon them; the Gospel is his power to salvation, to every one that believes, (Rom. i. 16.) and works effectually in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13. So it is the immediate instrument of their regeneration, after that the love and kindness of God to men appears, *i. e.* so as that they believe it, he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 4, 5. And then he makes them know it is not by works of righteousness, which they have done, but by his mercy, as it is there expressed. They are not (as was formerly said) the objects of his delightful love, before their regeneration; but they may be of his pity or mercy, his compassionate love; and this they are to believe, as the general proposal of his Gospel declares it: and by the belief hereof, he conquers their enmity, and subdues them into compliance with his good and acceptable will. These glad tidings, that he is truly willing to receive any returning soul, vanquishes their disaffection, and overcomes their hearts; makes them say with themselves, why should I still continue alienated from the God who is so gracious and merciful, abundant in loving-kindness, goodness, and truth, as his name signifies, (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) though he will by no means clear the guilty; *i. e.* the obstinate, impenitent, and implacable. But if this discovery of the grace of God can find no entrance, sinner, into thy soul, if it remain shut up in unbelief; or if, when he tells thee over and over, that he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they turn and live, thou wilt not believe him, but still think him implacable, and, Cain-like, say thy sin is greater than can be forgiven; this hardens thy heart in enmity against him, and makes thee say, as Jer. ii. 25. There is no hope, I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. Therefore if ever thou hast been or shall be reconciled to God, as thou hast not been left in a stupid insensibleness of thy former wickedness, so thou hast been kept from sinking into an utter despair of God's mercy; thy reconciliation is brought about by thy believing his reconcileableness.

6. Hereupon thou wast brought to entreat his favour with thy whole heart, and that he would be merciful to thee according to his word, Ps. cxix. 58. When thou sawest, though thy case was very horrid and dismal, yet it was not hopeless, and that there was a ground for prayer in the hope of mercy; then didst thou, or yet wilt, set thyself in good earnest to supplicate, and cry mightily for pardoning and heart-renewing grace. Where is no hope, there can be no prayer; this posture of soul thou hast been wrought up to, or wilt be, if ever thou be reconciled. Hope gives life and breath to prayer, and prayer, to peace and friendship with God. When God promises to take away the stony heart, and give the new one, the heart of flesh; he declares that even for this he will be inquired of, and sought unto, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 37. Nor doth the soul, when hope of mercy, according to God's word and promise, gives it vent, breathe faint breath in prayer; but the whole heart is engaged, all the powers of the soul are put into a fervent motion. Despair stupifies, hope fills the soul with vigour; the favour of God is sought, not with cold indifferency, but as that wherein stands thy life, (Ps. xxx. 5.) and which is better than life, (Ps. lxiii. 3.) without it, can be. But then, whereas the Gospel under which thou livest informs thee that God cannot be approached by a sinful creature, as men are, and as thou must own thyself to be, but through Christ, the only Mediator between God and men; and that thou canst not approach him in and by Christ, if thou be not in him.

7. Thou art hereupon led to Christ, and brought to receive him with all thy heart and soul, (John i. 12. Rom. x. 10.) and to resign and give thyself up wholly to him, (2 Cor. viii. 5.) not knowing in thy distress, what to do with thyself, and he compassionately inviting thee, O thou weary, heavy laden soul, come unto me, and I will give thee rest, (Matt. xi. 28.) and assuring thee, that whosoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out, John vi. 37. Thou thereupon with a humble, thankful, willing heart art brought to comply with his merciful offer, acceptest him and yieldest up thyself, no more to be thy own, but his; and thus believing in his name, thou ownest him in his office, as the great peace-maker between God and thee.

8. Whereupon thou hast been brought to apply thyself, through Christ, to the blessed God, and humbly to take hold of his covenant, Isa. lvi. 2. Thou hast come to God the Judge of all, having come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 23, 24. And been enabled to covenant with him, according to what he himself hath declared to be the purport and sum and substance of his covenant, that is, if thou art reconciled, thou hast taken him to be thy only God, thy supreme and sovereign good, thy chief and only satisfying portion, (Ps. xvi. 5, 6.) whom thou art most pleasantly to enjoy, and in whom thou art to take highest delight, above all things in heaven or earth, (Ps. lxxiii. 25.) and whom thou art to believe willing, according to this covenant, to do for thee, in outward and temporal respects, what he judgest fittest and best; and for thy soul, in his own way and method, all that is requisite for thy present support, and future blessedness. And to be thy supreme and sovereign Ruler and Lord, whom thou art to thy uttermost to please, serve, fear, obey, and glorify above all other. And to whom thou must reckon it belongs, according to this covenant, to forgive thy iniquities; and by it, as well as by natural right, to govern and dispose of thee in all thy thoughts, actions, inclinations, and affairs, according to his own holy will. And thou givest up thyself absolutely and entirely to him, to be of his people, to be taught and ruled by him. This is the covenant which in thy baptism thy parents, who had nearest natural relation to thee, entered into for thee; (as children do, in their parents, stand obliged to the government under which they live;) but which, when thou art come to use an understanding of thy own, thou art to enter into with the great God, for thyself, (as persons come to a certain age of maturity, are called to avow their allegiance to their secular rulers.) And because it is made with sinners, such as had been in rebellion against the Majesty of heaven, and therefore by a mediator, and by sacrifice; it is therefore a covenant of reconciliation, and the sacrifice by which it is made, is a propitiation or a reconciling sacrifice. If therefore Christ hath reconciled thee to God, or if ever thou shalt be reconciled, this covenant must pass between him and thee; this is to come into the history of his dealings with thy soul. And it ought to be with thee a great solemnity, and to fill thy soul with a wondering joy, that the great God, whom thou hadst so highly offended, should ever vouchsafe to covenant with thee a sinful worm! But because the manner of this covenanting is so fully set down, by Mr. Joseph Allen, and in a little treatise called Self-dedication, and in another of Yielding Ourselves to God, I shall not further enlarge upon it here.

9. If thou be reconciled, the frame and bent of thy soul is so far altered and changed, that thy carnal mind is become, in a prevailing degree, spiritual; and thy worldly heart is taken off, in a like measure, from this present world, and set upon God and heaven. For the carnal mind is enmity against God, and they that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them; and he that will be a

friend of this world, is the enemy of God, Rom. viii. 7. 1 John ii. 15. Jam. iv. 4. But canst thou be reconciled, and still be an enemy? And how canst thou not be an enemy, when not in this or that single act only, but in the main bent and frame of thy soul, thou resistest his will, and in thy whole course walkest contrary to him?

10. If thy reconciliation to God have been brought about, there must be suitable walking afterwards, which includes two things.—1. Amity must be continued, that is, there must be a very great care that there may be no new breach. 2. There must be much uneasiness of spirit, if there have been a new breach, till it be composed and made up again.

1. Where there is a thorough reconciliation, amity must be continued, care taken of giving any new offence, or the making any new breach, by not doing what will displease, and by a friendly intercourse continued and kept up. For there may be a new breach, or a new offence may be given again, either of these ways; either by breaking out into any fresh quarrel or contentions, or by breaking off friendly intercourse. As if there have been a war between two nations, when a firm peace is made, there ensues both a ceasing from hostilities, and free commerce; so if thou hast made peace with God, and hast entered into a league and covenant of reconciliation with him, thou must take great care, to thy uttermost, to sin no more; not deliberately to do any thing, that thou knowest will displease him. Thou must say, as is said in Job xxxiv. 32. If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more. And again, thou must take great heed of growing strange to him, of giving over, or of becoming slack or cold in thy converse with him; for when he inquires, "Can two walk together if they be not agreed?" he thereby intimates, that if they be agreed, it is that they may walk together. And it is to be considered, that in the text the unreconciled state consists, not only in the enmity of the mind by wicked works, but also in being alienated from him, or strange to him; by either whereof thou givest him also cause of just offence, even after reconciliation.

2. But if thou findest thou hast made a new breach, either of these ways, by doing any thing that thou didst apprehend to be displeasing to him, or by estranging thyself from him, there must be an uneasiness in thy spirit, and thou must be restless, till it be composed and made up again. This is walking suitably to a reconciled state, to resolve with thyself, upon any new offence, not to give sleep to thy eyes, nor slumber to thy eyelids, till thou have humbled thyself before thy God, and sought his pardon, by faith in the blood of his Son; with a resolution, in dependance on his grace and Spirit, to walk more carefully and more closely with him in thy future course, accounting always that in his favour is life. Such things as these if thou be reconciled to God, will compose and make up thy story of it. Such a narrative thou couldst give of it thyself, upon recollection, or at least thou canst say, when thou readest it thus put down to thy hand, thou canst say these things thou hast found God hath wrought and done in thee. Though perhaps they may not have come into thy mind in the same order wherein they are here set down, which is less material, if thou canst truly say such workings as these thou hast really felt in thine own heart, while God was dealing with thee, for the bringing about this reconciliation. But if this work be not yet done, if it is yet to be done, then know such stages as these thou must pass through. And thou art to be restless in thy spirit, while thou canst yet say, such and such of these things are still wanting in me; I have not yet found them, my heart agrees not in such and such points with this narrative; I can give no such account of myself. But wait and strive, in hope that thou shalt yet find them, if thou persist, and do not grow negligent and indifferent, whether any such reconciliation to God be effected in thee or no. And when thou hast found it, then art thou led to consider, in the next place,

2. God's reconciliation to thee; and inquire what that includes and carries in it. But here now, because his part lies in himself, and may for some time have no discernible effects upon thy soul; therefore the account hereof is not to be carried on in the way of the history, as the other might. It is doctrinally written in his own word, and so is the matter of thy faith, not of thy present sense, as the other is. But as it is indefinitely propounded in his word, so it ought to be firmly believed, and without wavering, as a sure part of the true and faithful sayings of God, who is truth itself, and cannot deceive nor be deceived. And it ought to be believed, with particular application to thyself, that thus and thus he bears himself towards thee, as thy reconciled God; according as thou findest thy own soul thus truly reconciled to him. For though thy reconciliation to him be no cause of his reconciliation to thee, yet it is a most certain evidence of it. Otherwise,

1. You would be beforehand with him in love, when as his word expressly says, he loves us first, 1 John iv. 19.

2. It would be true, that he made us love him, having himself no love to us; when as the same word says, we love him, because he first loved us; *viz.* with that compassionate love whereof you formerly heard.

3. You would hereupon outdo him in point of love, and be better affected towards him than he is towards you.

4. If any could be reconciled to God, and yet God not be reconciled to them, and they die in that state, it would be possible there might be lovers of God in hell. And what can be more absurd in itself? or more contrary to the plain word of God, that hath said, the things which eye hath not seen are prepared for them that love God, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) and that he hath promised the crown of life to them that love him, Jam. i. 12. All which you cannot but apprehend to be intolerable absurdities, and they would all follow, if upon such grounds as have been mentioned you should apprehend yourself to be reconciled to him, and yet disbelieve his being reconciled to you. Therefore having so sure a ground, upon which to apprehend he is reconciled to you, when you find you are reconciled to him; let it now be considered what his reconciliation to you imports. Wherein, as in all that follows, I shall be very brief; that this part be not too unproportionable in bulk to the former gone out before it. And here two things in the general must be understood to be included in God's being reconciled to us.—1. His forgiving to us all the sins of our former state of enmity against him: 2. His receiving us into a state of amity and friendship with him. How great things are both these! And if you cannot as yet with certainty conclude that you are reconciled to God, as thereupon to have a present assurance of his having thus forgiven, and accepted you; yet you are however to apprehend both these as most certainly belonging to their state, who are reconciled to him, so as to make you most earnestly to covet, and endeavour to get into that state; as perceiving how desirable a thing it is to have the eternal God no longer an enemy to you, but your friend.

1. Therefore you must apprehend God's being reconciled to you, includes his forgiving you all the sins of your former state, wherein you lived in enmity against him. And of how vast compass and extent is his mercy towards you herein! when you consider what you were doing, and what manner of life you led all that time; always sinning from morning to night either by acting against him, or by not living with him, and to him! not minding him, not fearing him, standing in no awe of him, never aiming to please, or serve, or glorify him in any thing you did, as if you were made for yourself, and not for him! And that your disobedience to him, your neglects of him, were all summed up in enmity! And how monstrous a thing it was to be an enemy, a hater of the ever-blessed God! And to have all this forgiven! So his own word plainly speaks: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon, Isa. lv. 7.

And here you must understand aright what sort of pardon and forgiveness that is, when God is said to forgive; which you must conceive of, by considering what sort of enmity yours was against him. The case is not as between equals, falling out and forgiving one another; but your enmity was that of an offending inferior and subject, rebelling against your sovereign, rightful Lord, who hath both right and power to punish you. And then think how terrible punishment you deserved, and were liable to! even an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 9. Whereupon

consider what it signifies for him to forgive you: and see now whether you do not savour those words, Blessed is the man; or whether the sense of your case do not make you cry out, as those words may be read, O the blessednesses of him, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! O the blessednesses of him, to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity! Of how mighty a load must it ease and disburden thy soul, to have thy offended Lord say to thee, Thou hast been sinning against me hitherto all thy days, when I have been all thy days doing thee good; thou hast done evilly against me as thou couldst, slighted my authority and despised my mercy; I could plead my rebukes against thee, with flames of fire; if I should whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold of vengeance, how soon could I ease myself of so feeble an adversary, and avenge myself of so contemptible an enemy! But I forgive thee: now upon thy repenting and turning to me with thy whole soul, I forgive thy ungodly prayerless life, thy having been alienated and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works. I forgive it to thee all! Thy iniquity is all pardoned, thy sin covered, I no more impute any thing of it to thee. What rock would not this melt! what stony heart would it not dissolve, and break in pieces! And what! canst thou now be any longer an unreconciled enemy, to such a sin-pardoning God? Consider here more particularly,—the properties and consequences of this forgiveness.

1. The properties of it, as that,

1. It is most compassionate, an act of tender mercy and pity; so says his own word: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, Heb. viii. 12. In his love and pity he redeemed, and he bare them, Isa. lxiii. 9. And being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity, Ps. lxxviii. 38. For he remembered they were but flesh, *v.* 39.

2. It is perfectly free, and of mere grace. We are justified freely by his grace, Rom. iii. 24. He invites sinners to come to him, even without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1. A great price indeed hath been paid, but by another hand, as we shall show when we come to the second head, the way wherein our Lord effects this reconciliation, in the body of his flesh through death. But no price is expected from us, he doth it for his own sake, as Isa. xliii. 25.

3. It is full and entire. And that both in respect of the object, the sin forgiven: All manner of sin (that can be repented of) shall be forgiven unto men, Matt. xii. 31. I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me, Jer. xxxiii. 8. And in respect of the act of forgiving, it shall be so full as to leave no displeasure behind: for (as he speaks) I, even I am he that blotteth out thy iniquities, and there is not so much as a remembrance left; I will not remember thy sins, Isa. xliii. 25. Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more, Heb. viii. 12.

4. 'Tis often repeated. He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity—yea, many a time turned he his anger away, Ps. lxxviii. 38.

2. The consequences of this forgiveness.

1. Cessation of all acts, that have either destruction for their end, or enmity for their principle. In the very covenant of reconciliation, God reserves to himself a liberty of chastening his reconciled ones; yea, the case requiring it, he not only reserves the liberty, but takes upon him an obligation hereunto. For he expressly declares, that if his children forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments; then he will visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; but that, nevertheless, he will not utterly take away his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor break his covenant, Ps. lxxxix. 31—34. implying that otherwise his faithfulness would fail, and his covenant were broken on his part. And therefore when he deals not with a people upon covenant terms, but as cast-aways, and as people given up, he declares: I will not punish your daughters, Hos. iv. 14. And why should they be smitten any more? Isa. i. 5. And they themselves own; It was good for them to have been afflicted, Psal. cxix. 71. and that he had done it in very faithfulness, *v.* 75. And his correcting them is signified not only to consist with love, but to proceed from it; for 'tis said, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, Heb. xii. 6. And those afflictions are properly punitive, as they import warning to others; but not vindictive, as tending to the destruction of themselves; but corrective, as intending their own amendment, besides warning to others, which also those that are destructive might do. But these afflictive strokes upon his own, as they intend warning to others, have the general nature of punishment in them. But they differ in their special kind, as being to themselves corrective only, not destructive, or vindictive. But upon the whole, when once he is reconciled to you, he no longer treats you as enemies; if sometimes he see cause to afflict his own, he smites them not as he smites those that smote them, Isa. xxvii. 7. Your carriage doth not always please him, therefore 'tis not strange, if his dealings do not always please you; but after forgiveness he intends your real and final hurt no more.

2. A second consequent of God's forgiving you all your sins, is his seasonable manifestation hereof to you. He may have forgiven you, and not judge it seasonable suddenly to make it known to you: he may judge it fit to hold you, some time, in suspense. And when by his grace he hath enabled you to exercise repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whereupon you are in a pardoned state; you may yet sometime remain in doubt, whether you were sincere herein or no. And may not on a sudden put you out of doubt, but keep you a while in a waiting posture; as that which is more suitable to his own majesty and greatness, and to your own infirm and less established condition. He waits to be gracious, and is exalted even in showing mercy, for he is a God of judgment, and doth show mercy judiciously, when he judges it the fittest season; therefore are they blessed that wait for him, Isa. xxx. 18. Assurance is the privilege not of all his children, but of them that are come to a more grown stature; but in the mean time he sustains you, by hope in his mercy, and lets not your heart sink within you. And when he sees it fit, lets you know he hath accepted the atonement for you, which he hath enabled you to receive; and speaks that peace to you, which is the fruit of his lips, and which he only, by speaking it inwardly to your heart, can create; that peace which passes all understanding, Isa. lvii. 18. Phil. iv. 7. and which belongs to his kingdom in you; with joy in the Holy Ghost, when once the foundation is laid in righteousness, Rom. xiv. 17.

2. This reconciliation, on God's part, not only includes the forgiveness of your former enmity, with all the sins of that fearful state wherein you then were; but also his receiving you into a state of amity and friendship with himself. And this you are to take for a great addition to the former. A prince may pardon to a malefactor a capital crime, spare his forfeited life and estate; and yet not take him for a favourite and a friend. But when the blessed God forgives his enemies, he also takes them for his friends; though those are distinct things, yet they are most closely conjunct; he always adds this latter to the former.

Abraham was called the friend of God, Isa. xli. 8. *i. e.* not only in the active sense, as now bearing a friendly mind towards God; but in the passive sense also, as now God hath a friendly mind towards him. And upon what account? Some may think Abraham being a person of eminent sanctity, this may be said of him only upon that peculiar account. But see how the matter must be understood, from what we find, Jam. ii. 23. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God; this is spoken of him, not as an eminent saint only, but under the common notion of a believer; so that the same thing is truly to be said of every one that believes, with a justifying faith. So saith our Saviour to his disciples in common: Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, John xv. 14. And—I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you, (*v.* 15.) which signifies his own friendly mind to them. And now consider what this friendliness towards them includes. It must include,

1. Love, which is the very soul of friendship. So our Saviour expresses his own friendliness towards them that are his: As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love, *v.* 9. And the height of that love, *v.* 13. Greater love than that hath no man, that

a man should lay down his life for his friends; though 'tis elsewhere further heightened, from our having been sinners and enemies, Rom. v. 8, 10. though it was then in view to him what he designed to make of them, *viz.* friends to him too. And so his friendship must signify further, not love merely, but also after-reconciliation, there mentioned, v. 10.

2. A delightful, complacential love. For such is the love of friends, a love of delight, which they take in one another; as if he had said, "Now I have overcome you, and won your hearts, I love you with that pleasantness, that delightful love, which is proper to the state of friendship." So such friends are spoken to, Cant. ii. 14. O my dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely: and that book abounds with expressions of that import: Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. How fair is my love! chap. iv. 7, 9, 10, &c. But besides what this friendship, as such, or as it hath in it the general notion of friendship, includes; consider further some particularities belonging to this friendship, as,

1. How infinitely condescending it is on God's part. That the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, who hath infinite fulness in himself, and could with delight live alone to all eternity, as he did from all eternity, that he should vouchsafe to take from among his own creatures, such as he would make friends of; how admirable! much more of such creatures, apostate revolted creatures, impure and vile creatures! such as he hath so much to do upon, to make them kind and holy, that they might be capable of his friendship!

According to the usual measures of friendship, 'tis with those that are like, yea with equals. How transporting should it be to thy soul, that the great God should entertain and strike such a friendship with thee, so vile, so rebellious and abject as thou wast! Solomon speaks of it as a wonderful thing, and even exceeding all belief, that God should dwell, (which dwelling signifies friendly society,) saith he, In very deed will God dwell with men! such creatures as men are now become! and with men on earth! in this their low and mean state, and on this narrow, little, base spot; when even the bright and spacious heavens, yea the heaven of heavens, cannot contain him, 2 Chron. vi. 18. How wonderful a thing is this! and even surpassing all wonders! Is it after the manner of men? how far, herein, are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts! even as the heavens are above the earth, Isa. lv. 8. Consider,

2. How beneficial this his friendship to us is! Many friends can only wish well to one another, have neither wisdom nor power really to befriend them; his friendship is most beneficial to them on whom 'tis placed, having all-sufficient fulness in himself to counsel, to support, to relieve, to supply them as the matter shall require.

3. How conversable he is with these his friends, being,

1. Always present. One may have a wise and potent friend, but perhaps he is far off when there is greatest need of him.

2. Being intimately present, with our minds and spirits. The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit, 2 Tim. iv. 22. He can be always so. The most inward friends, among men, can have no immediate access to one another's spirits; but this is the peculiar advantage of this friend, that he can enter into our very souls; nothing is shut up from him.

4. How constant is God's friendship! He loves with an everlasting love, and to the end, (Jer. xxxi. 3. Isa. liv. 8. John xiii. 1.) when other friendships are upon slight grounds, easily, and often broken off. Thus far we have seen what this mutual recollection imports, on our part, towards God; and on God's part towards us. We now come to consider,

2. The way wherein our Lord Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and us, brings about this reconciliation; *viz.* In the body of his flesh through death. The same thing is expressed in the 20th verse, by his making peace by the blood of his cross, or his shedding his blood on the cross. The meaning of both expressions is, that he brought about this reconciliation, by suffering death for us, upon the cross. Now because this reconciliation, as you have heard, includes both God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God; and that both are effected by his dying upon the cross for us; we are to show how each of these are brought about this way.

1. How God's reconciliation to us is wrought, by Christ dying for us. You may say, why was this the means of reconciling God to us? for you may think with yourselves, if God had a mind to be reconciled to sinners, could he not have been so, without letting his Son die for it? There are, indeed, difficulties in this matter, which are not fit to be brought into such a discourse as this; but I shall here say nothing about it but what is plain, and easy to be understood.

1. You can easily apprehend, that God saw it was necessary his Son should die, in order to the saving of sinners; for who can think he would ever have consented to the death of his most beloved Son, if he had not seen it necessary. Therefore you must conclude it was necessary, whether you discern the reasons upon which it was so, or no.

2. You can easily apprehend that the sins of men deserved eternal death, and that God threatened them with eternal death accordingly; for what death but eternal death can that be, which is opposed to eternal or everlasting life? (Rom. v. 21. vi. 23.) and which is executed upon all that are not reconciled, according to the sentence of the last judgment, Matt. xxv. ult.

3. You cannot but know that there were sacrifices under the law of Moses, appointed to make atonement for sin, and that without shedding of blood there could be no remission, Heb. ix. 22.

4. 'Tis easy to be understood, that the blood of those sacrifices could not take away sin, as is expressly said, (Heb. x. 4.) and therefore that they could not otherwise signify any thing, to the taking it away, than as they were types and shadows of that great sacrifice, that once for all was to be offered up for that purpose. Once in, or towards the end of, the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26.

5. You can understand that as this could never have been, without the consent of the Father and the Son; so by their consent it might be, that the innocent might suffer for the guilty: as one may be bound, body for body, for another.

6. And it is plain they did consent, God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have life everlasting, John iii. 16. And our Lord Jesus Christ himself says, no man could take his life from him, *i. e.* against his will, for he could have twelve legions of angels to defend it, but he did lay it down, (John x. 18.) and gave his life a ransom for many, Matt. xx. 28.

7. So it came to pass that our Lord Jesus suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. And he was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him.

8. And hereupon when God is reconciled to sinners, he doth not only forgive them, but he justifies them, there being an equal recompense made to him; but of his own providing, and therefore to us it is most free, though it was very costly to Christ. So both these expressions, of the same thing, are put together: We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins—that God might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, Rom. iii. 24, 26.

9. Thus God becomes reconciled to sinful men (not to every one, but to them that sincerely repent and believe) in a just, regular, and orderly way, most becoming his excellent Majesty. For though he forgive sinners, that had affronted him, and rebelled against him; yet it is not without a sacrifice, and that of his own Son, a sacrifice of infinite value; most becoming his grace and mercy, for that sacrifice was of his own providing. Most becoming his justice, for though sin be forgiven, it is punished too; forgiven to us, but punished in his own Son, who consented to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Most becoming the truth of his word, for, as that said, without shedding of blood there could be no remission; the most precious blood was shed that ever was, in order to our remission. Most becoming his infinite

wisdom, that found out this way of answering all purposes; that both he might be glorified in the highest degree, and yet sinners be saved. Grace hath herein abounded in all wisdom and prudence, Eph. i. 6, 7, 8.

2. We come now (having thus far seen how Christ's dying on the cross works God's reconciliation to us) to show also how it brings about our reconciliation to God. And here you may observe, we changed the method of speaking to this two-fold reconciliation, considered in itself, and as the effect of Christ's death. For though God is not actually reconciled to us before he hath disposed our hearts to a reconciliation unto him; yet the foundation of his being reconciled to us, is first laid in the death of his Son, or in the prospect and foresight of it; before there can be any disposition on our parts to such a reconciliation. And that being done, and it being thereby seen what this great sacrifice signifies to his being reconciled, whensoever that shall be; it comes, in the proper order, next to be considered which way it works, to bring about the reconciliation also. And it works, in order hereto, these two ways.

1. By preparing the ground of preaching the Gospel of reconciliation, or of Christ crucified; which must first be, or have been resolved on, before there could be any Gospel to reveal it. In this Gospel Christ is set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 25. And this is the proper and most apt means to work upon thy heart, sinner, to persuade thee to be reconciled to God. Looking upon him whom thou has pierced, is that thou mayest mourn over him, Zech. xii. 10. What should so melt and overcome thy heart, and make thee yield to the terms of reconciliation? But he must be represented, that he may be looked upon; and therefore is the preaching of Christ crucified, unto them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, (1 Cor. i. 23, 24.) the most powerful and the wisest method; and which God hath thought fittest to win souls, and reconcile them to himself. Therefore it is reckoned no less than a witchery, if they obey not the Gospel, who have Christ set forth before their eyes, as crucified among them, (Gal. iii. 1.) which setting forth could not be otherwise, than in the Gospel representation. For you know Christ was not actually crucified in Galatia, but at Jerusalem; therefore, saith our Lord himself, But I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me, John xii. 32. This was said, (as it follows,) signifying what death he should die, *i. e.* by being crucified. And this, supposing a due representation of him in the Gospel, was in point of means to draw all men. But it could only be sufficient, as a means; when yet it could not be a means sufficient, if there were not an Agent able to use it to that purpose. Therefore,

2. Our Redeemer's dying upon the cross did work towards our reconciliation, by procuring the Spirit to be given, in order to the making this most apt means effectual to this end. And if this sacrifice of Christ on the cross was necessary to the obtaining forgiveness of sins, it was, at least, equally necessary to obtain the giving of the Spirit, without which all the rest were in vain. When Christ had died to reconcile both (*i. e.* Jew and Gentile) in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and thereupon preached peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh; yet it was still necessary that by one Spirit both should have access to the Father; otherwise they would never come at him, they would still, with implacable hearts, have kept at a distance. Therefore looking upon a crucified Christ would never have had this effect, to make them mourn over him, whom they had pierced; if the Spirit of grace and supplication were not poured forth, Zech. xii. 10. They would with hard hearts have gazed long enough on this doleful spectacle, far enough from mourning; if the Spirit of Christ were not poured forth, as well as his blood.

And do we think that holy and pure Spirit would ever have been poured forth, on so impure and unholy souls, if the precious blood of that invaluable sacrifice had not been poured forth to procure it? Those words of the apostle make this plain, (Gal. iii. 13, 14.) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, (for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,) that the blessing of Abraham might reach further, come upon the Gentiles; that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Or in their being made to believe the ever-blessed One was so far made a curse, that you might be capable of this blessing; and by it have your own enmity overcome, and your reconciliation brought about. Therefore doth our Lord direct us to pray for the Spirit, assuring us our heavenly Father will give that Holy Spirit to them that ask him, (Luke xi. 13.) as well knowing, his pouring forth his blood had deserved it should not any longer be an enclosed blessing; but which might be communicated to Jew and Gentile, and in his way and season be poured out on all flesh. Thus doth our Lord, in the body of his flesh through death, work out this two-fold reconciliation, both of God to you, and of you to God.

And now the use follows, which must have reference both,—1. To the mutual reconciliation itself, You hath he now reconciled; and—2. To the way wherein our Lord Jesus brings it about, In the body of his flesh through death. The use we shall make of the former will be two-fold, (according as this reconciliation itself is two-fold, *viz.* God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God) *viz.* to persuade us from sundry considerations,—

1. To believe God's reconcileableness to us.—2. To be willing, hereupon, to be actually and speedily reconciled to him. And the use which is only now intended to be made of the latter, is to draw from it divers additional considerations, by which to enforce and give further strength to both those mentioned exhortations.

1. For the use of the former, the doctrine of the reconciliation itself. Inasmuch as we have shown that it contains reconciliation, on God's part towards us, and on our part towards God, we must understand,

1. That God's reconciliation is asserted here, to the persons whom the apostle now mentions; and whom he had before described as converts, saints faithful in Christ, (*ch.* i. 1.) that Christ had reconciled them, *i. e.* restored them into a state of grace, favour, and acceptance, though they had been alienated, and enemies in their minds. Therefore, if when they become saints, faithful, &c. God was reconciled to them; while they were yet in their state of enmity, he was reconcileable. The plain use to be made of this, is—that we be persuaded to *believe* God's reconcileableness to sinners, offending creatures, such as had been strangers to him, and enemies; whatsoever bar was in the way, is so far removed (as we shall show from the second head) that he can be reconciled to such enemies, and will actually be so, whensoever they turn to him. This, sinner, is the sum of the Gospel, which thou art to believe upon sundry considerations, which have their ground here; as,

1. This Gospel could never be intended for these only, to whom the apostle now writes. Can we think there was one Gospel meant for Colossians, and another, or none at all, for Englishmen? Yea, when the apostle himself was converted and obtained mercy, it was for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe, 1 Tim. i. 16. You have the same warrant to believe, that turning to God and believing on his Son, God will be reconciled to you as he was to them.

2. This is the Gospel which God hath ever declared to the world, without accepting any person, wheresoever his written word hath come, (Isa. lv.) Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, even he that hath no money, come without money, and without price, *v.* 1. Incline your ear, and come to me, hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *v.* 3. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy; to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. For my ways are not as your ways, *v.* 7, 8. So the tenor of his word hath always run, "Turn to me, and I will turn to you," 2 Chron. xxx. 6. Jer. iii. 12. Zech. i. 3. Mal. iii. 7. And is it not to be believed?

3. It is the Gospel which he hath confirmed, by his own solemn oath, (as I live saith the Lord,) having plainly propounded it, (Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, 23, 31, 32.) He swears to it, (*ch.* xxxiii. 11.) and wilt thou not yet believe him?

4. When after the fulness of time, it was more expressly revealed, that there could be no turning to God, but through Christ; this was the Gospel which he himself

preached, (Mark i. 14, 15.) and which, when he was leaving the world, he required should be preached to all the world, Mark xvi. 15, 16.

5. It is given as the sum of all the counsel of God, Acts xx. 21.

6. It is the everlasting Gospel, which is to continue through all ages, as the stated means of regenerating and renewing souls, 1 Pet. i. 23, 24, 25.

7. It is this Gospel which God blesses, and makes effectual to this purpose. When, herein, the love and kindness of God to men appear, then (not by works of righteousness which they have done) but of his mercy he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 4, 5. His mercy revealed, softens and changes their hearts; so that by the exceeding great and precious promises, contained in this Gospel, they are made partakers of a divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4.

8. But it is by believing it becomes effectual to any blessed purpose. It is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believes, (Rom. i. 16.) but to them that believe it not, it is without power, and effects nothing. It works effectually on every one that believes, (1 Thess. ii. 13.) but hath no efficacy when it is not believed. Much people, believing, were turned to the Lord, (Acts xi. 23.) but where there is no believing there is no turning.

9. Where it is not believed it hardens. We are therefore warned to take heed of the evil heart of unbelief, lest we be hardened. (Heb. iii. 12, 13.) and are told those hardened ones that fell in the wilderness, were such as believed not, and that could not enter into Canaan (the type of heaven) because of unbelief, (*v.* 18, 19.) and that the Gospel could not profit them because it was not mixed with faith, *ch.* iv. 2.

10. It is in the same context mentioned, as a most provoking wickedness, to disbelieve this Gospel of his. That sin was therefore said to be the provocation, (Heb. iii. 15.) and referring to the same time, the great God says; How long will this people provoke? how long ere they believe me? (Numb. xiv. 11.) when their not believing his willingness to do better for them, than only to bestow upon them an earthly Canaan, was their most provoking wickedness.

11. The not believing of this Gospel of his, is understood to be giving God the lie, (1 John v. 10.) as believing it is setting to our seal that he is true, John iii. 33. But what inducement is it possible he can have to lie to his own creatures, who is himself all-sufficient; and who hath them absolutely in his power? Or what man would lie for lying sake, having no inducement? It is therefore impossible for God to lie, as being inconsistent with the universal perfections of his nature; and therefore to impute falsehood to him, is highest blasphemy. And after all this, sinner, darest thou disbelieve God's reconcileableness to thee, upon his own declared terms; when here the whole business sticks, of reconciliation between him and thee? But there are yet other considerations to this purpose, to persuade thy *belief* of God's reconcileableness to thee, from the

2. Head of discourse, the way of our Lord's bringing about this reconciliation, *viz.* in the body of his flesh through death. And here his reconcileableness must be understood to signify two things:—the possibility of God's being reconciled to sinners,—his willingness to be reconciled. And the death of his Son upon the cross, in order hereto, affords considerations to evince both.

1. The possibility of the thing, which this sacrifice proves to be possible, because it makes it so. When the apostle asserts, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, (Heb. ix. 22.) and that it was impossible the blood of bulls and goats should take it away, (*ch.* x. 4.) and that, therefore, our Lord came to take it away, in that body prepared for him, (*v.* 5, 6.) he therein implies it to be impossible to be otherwise taken away, than by this blood shed upon the cross; nothing, indeed, being possible to God, which becomes him not. And it became him not otherwise to effect this design, and bring many sons to glory, but by the sufferings of this his Son. It was, therefore, not possible upon other terms, (Heb. ii. 10.) but in this way it was possible, upon the account of these several things concurring;

1. The rich and infinite value and fulness of this sacrifice. The blood that was herein shed, and the life that was laid down, though of a man, yet were the blood and life of such a man as was also God, (Acts xx. 28. 1 John iii. 16.) a man that was God's own fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. As it was God that was offended, so it was God that did satisfy for the offence.

2. He was nearly allied to us, as a Redeemer ought to be. Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part with us of the same, (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) therefore as man did offend, man suffered for it.

3. He freely consented hereto, both to become man, and to suffer for man, Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. John x. 18.

4. He had no sin of his own to suffer for, 2 Cor. v. 21. and as many other scriptures speak.

5. He was, by a special, divine law, commissioned hereunto. Therefore his laying down his life, was in itself no illegal act. He had power to lay down his life, having received a commandment for it from the Father, John x. 18. He came, having God's law, to this purpose, in his heart, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8.

6. He was fully accepted herein above, his sacrifice having a sweet-smelling odour with it, unto God; because satisfying his justice, it made way for the free exercise of his grace and love, Eph. v. 2. Therefore, sinner, canst thou disbelieve or doubt the very possibility of God's being reconciled to thee, upon his own declared terms; when so extraordinary a course was taken that he might be reconciled?

2. And thou hast as great reason to believe his willingness to be reconciled, considering that this was consented to on purpose. God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, John iii. 16. Now consider, was his own Son given for what he was not willing of? his only-begotten Son! his very image! (Heb. i. 2.) the Son of his delights, always dear to him! (Prov. viii. 30.) and who was especially dear to him for this very reason! John x. 17. Yea, and that it was the very cry of his blood from the cross, O forgive, forgive this repenting, believing sinner, be reconciled to him, O Father, for the sake of thy dying Son! And yet was he unwilling? What could induce him who is love itself, to give up such a Son, to so bitter, bloody, and ignominious sufferings, but his willingness to be reconciled to sinners? It were a blasphemy against the ever-blessed nature and being of God, to imagine he would have his most beloved Son suffer for suffering's sake! And for what other end could it be? And there is as little reason to doubt the issue, but that, being an enemy, thou wast reconciled by the death of his Son; being reconciled, thou shalt be saved by his life, Rom. v. 10. It therefore remains to press the

2. Exhortation, which you may take in the apostle's words, (2 Cor. v. 20.) We, the ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, do pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Now that is put out of doubt, that God justly and honourably can be reconciled to you, (without which it had been impossible,) and that he is most unquestionably willing; are you yet unwilling to be reconciled to him? Consider both this reconciliation itself, brought about with some, You hath he reconciled; and the way of it, In the body of his flesh through death.

1. Some have been reconciled, that have been alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works. Whereupon bethink yourselves,

1. Have you any greater reason to be implacable towards the blessed God, than those Colossians? why should you be more wicked enemies?

2. Can you better maintain your cause against God? are you more able to stand against all the power of his wrath which you so little know? Psal. xc. 11.

3. Can you better bear the loss and want of the comforts of his love, while you live? to have the great God for your friend? to whom you have free recourse, and may pour out your souls daily? upon whom you may cast all your cares? with whom you may walk in friendly love, and may converse with him every day?

4. Can you less need his supports in a dying hour? Will it be easy to you to die unreconciled? and afterwards to appear convicted, unreconcileable enemies before the tribunal of your Judge? and then to have no advocate, no

intercessor to plead for you? When he himself must be your condemning Judge, and shall only say, O that thou hadst known, in the day of thy visitation, the things that did belong to thy peace? but now they are hid from thy eyes, Luke xix. 42, 44.

2. But we are further to persuade this reconciliation to God, from the way wherein our Lord effects it: In the body of his flesh, through death, or by dying a sacrifice upon the cross. And now you know this, will you not yet be reconciled to him? Consider,

1. You will herein frustrate and make insignificant to yourself, the highest demonstration that could be given of God's good-will towards you. God so loved the world, &c. (John iii. 16.) and what could our Lord himself have done more to testify his own love? For greater love hath no man, than to lay down his life for his friends, John xv. 13. Yea, for those that were not so before, but wicked enemies; only that thereby they might be made friends, Rom. v. 8. And what could it signify to you, to represent the divine love to you by so costly a demonstration, if it do not gain your love?

2. And what could be so apt a means, sinner, to break thy heart, and conquer all thy former enmity, as to behold thy Redeemer dying upon the cross for thee? They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn, Zech. xii. 10. And I, if I be lift up, will draw all men to me; which our Lord said, signifying what death he should die, by being lift up on the cross, John xii. 32, 33. Now what dost thou think of thyself, if such a sight will not move thee? An earthly, carnal, worldly mind, is declared over and over to be enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7. James iv. 4. But how remarkable is it, that such a temper of mind should be so peculiarly signified to import enmity to the cross of Christ! Phil. iii. 18, 19. I tell you of such, weeping, saith the apostle, that do even continue their enmity even in the face of the cross! and who even by that itself are not overcome!

3. If thou wilt not be reconciled, Christ did, as to thee, die in vain, thou canst be nothing the better. Think what it must come to, that so precious blood (infinitely exceeding the value of all corruptible things; silver and gold, &c. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) should be shed, to redeem and save such as thou, and yet do thee no good!

4. If thou continue to the last unreconciled, it not only doth thee no good, but it must cry and plead most terribly against thee. Blood-guiltiness is a fearful thing? What must it be to be guilty of such blood! If thou wert guilty of the blood of thy father, thy child, or of the wife of thy bosom, how would it astonish thee! But to be guilty of the blood of the Son of God! How canst thou live under it? If thou wert guilty of all the innocent blood that ever was shed, since the creation of the world, it were not comparable to the guilt of this blood!

5. But if thou come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel, as a reconciled believing penitent; thou wilt also come and be adjoined to the general assembly, to the church of the first-born written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. O the joy in heaven that will be concerning thee! And O the fulness of thy own joy, into which thou shalt enter at last: for consider,

6. And in the last place, what follows in the latter part of this verse, that is, that thou wilt be presented, by thy Redeemer, holy, and unblamable, and unreprovable in the sight of God, as if thou hadst never offended, and never been an enemy. All thy former transgressions, that have overwhelmed thee with just sorrow, shall all be overwhelmed in that kind, paternal joy, as for the returning prodigal; This my son was lost, and is found. And thy having been so long alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works, will all be forgotten and swallowed up in the embraces of infinite, everlasting love!

A SERMON,

PREACHED ON THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER, 1703.

READER,

THIS discourse was preached without any the least thought of its being made more public; and a considerable time passed afterwards, without any such intention. I thought it, indeed, too uncomposed to appear in the world; but in a matter of no worse consequence, I make no difficulty of acknowledging, that I at length chose rather to follow the judgment of the many hearers, that moved for this further publication, than my own. Therefore, amidst much other business, and great infirmities, that are sufficiently monitory to me to be unconcerned for the gratifying of curiosity, in myself, or in any others, I so far revised it, as very imperfect memorials would enable me. If any where it be somewhat enlarged, that can be no prejudice to them that heard it; and much less to them that heard it not.

That it may be of some use to direct our thanksgivings, (and supplications also,) so as, without the neglect of lower and subservient mercies, they may have principal respect to blessings of the highest value, is the serious desire and prayer of an earnest well-willer to the true prosperity of the Christian church,

J. H.

COLOSSIANS I. 13.

WHO HATH DELIVERED US FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS, AND HATH TRANSLATED US INTO THE KINGDOM OF HIS DEAR SON.

You already know, that the occasion of our assembling together this day is two-fold; to commemorate some former national mercies, and deliverances from certain very considerable efforts of that power of darkness, which is peculiar to the devil's kingdom; and also, to prepare for the commemoration, at the approaching season, of the much more general mercy of our common redemption, in the observation of a solemn rite belonging to the kingdom of Christ.[a] The two parts of this text give us an apt and suitable ground for each of these. For giving God thanks, for great former mercies; and preparation for that designed holy solemnity.

We begin, for the former of these purposes, with the first part of the text, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." And that we may see how accommodate this will be to the former mentioned purpose (as comprehended within the import of this clause, and but comprehended, it being of much greater latitude) some things I must previously note to you. As,

1. That there is a kingdom manifestly implied in these words, "The power of darkness," unto which the kingdom of God's dear Son is opposite. And,

2. That this kingdom can be no other than the devil's kingdom, whom our Lord himself doth own to have a kingdom. If Satan be divided against himself, how then can his kingdom stand? Matt. xii. 26. These are our Lord's own words, and joined, in that context, with what sufficiently intimates that kingdom to be directly opposite to his own.

3. That the distinguishing characters of these two opposite kingdoms, the kingdom of the devil, and the kingdom of God's dear Son, are darkness, and light; the one is a kingdom of darkness, and the other is a kingdom of light. The devils are called the rulers of the former, so stigmatized, Eph. vi. 12. principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Our Lord's is implied to be a kingdom of light, in the words immediately foregoing; Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, &c. It is a kingdom they are to inherit, Matt. xxv. 34. In its most perfect state it comprehends brightest light, purity, and glory: as the opposite kingdom, consummate, is utter darkness. And so are the beginnings and first principles of each. Ye were darkness, now are light in the Lord—Eph. v. 8. Both are seen, in the unconverted and converted state; to turn them from darkness to light, and (which shows that darkness to be satanical) from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. As what their inheritance is hereupon to be, the next words show, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified. And yet again,

4. That the darkness, which characterizes the devil's kingdom, includes those things that are directly opposite unto those included in the light, which characterizes the kingdom of Christ. The light that characterizes the kingdom of Christ, includes these two things, truth and holiness.

These are the principal things comprehended in the notion of light, as it is characteristical of the kingdom of the Son of God. The light of truth, objectively revealed, and subjectively received, the frame of Christian doctrine, with the knowledge and belief thereof; and the light of holiness, so shining in the lives of Christians, that men may see their good works, Matt. v. 16. Accordingly the darkness, that doth characterize the devil's kingdom, doth comprehend it in falsehood and wickedness.

It comprehends in it all manner of falsehood, truth obscured and perverted, ignorance, error, deceit, blindness of heart, (Eph. iv. 18.) a wilful overlooking of the great and most necessary truths, which the souls of men are, above all other, concerned to take in, and admit into, their inward parts. And it comprehends wickedness in the whole compass of it; wickedness against God, all manner of impiety, idolatry, blasphemy, neglect and profanation of the ordinances and institutions, wherein he claims to be worship-

[a] It being our usual monthly season of preparation for the Lord's supper.

pad, in the proper seasons thereof. Wickedness against men, all comprehended and summed up in their hatred of one another. He that hateth his brother, is in darkness, even diabolical; for they who emerge, and are recovered out of it, are said to have overcome the wicked one, 1 John ii. 11, 13. And both these sorts of wickedness are put together, Rom. xiii. 12, 13. Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. And those works of darkness are said to be chambering, wantonness, rioting, drunkenness, strife, and envying. And Eph. v. 11. We are warned to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Which works are (ver. 3. and 4.) said to be fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, (which is also said to be idolatry,) filthiness, foolish talking, &c. as things that bar us from any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, or of God. And Christians are therefore forbidden to be partakers therein, (ver. 7.) because they are light, and children of light, ver. 8. And as 'tis, 1 Thess. v. 5. of the day, not of the night, nor of darkness. They are of the opposite kingdom, and must walk conformably thereto. Our way being thus far plain, we go on to add,

5. That the power which the devil exerts and exercises, in this darkness, is two-fold: first, spiritual and internal; secondly, secular and external.

1. There is a spiritual power which he exercises in this darkness, acting more immediately upon the minds and spirits of men. The God of this world blinds their minds, who believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4. And he is said to be the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, Ephes. ii. 2. And the impenitent, such as have not hitherto repented and turned to God, it is said, He leads them captive at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26. And,

2. There is a secular power which he also exerts, in the midst of that darkness that he hath brought upon this world, relating, as far as he can obtain leave, to the bodies of men, and their external concernments and affairs; and not only of particular persons, but of nations and kingdoms, especially where he observes any design to be more directly formed against his kingdom, and interest in this world; he thereupon comes to be engaged in a more open and explicit opposition. And so when he is the author of this or that bodily or outward affliction, to a particular person, as he can obtain divine permission; this is an effort of his power, in the midst of that darkness. Such as are rescued out of his kingdom, his design is to vex, because he cannot destroy them, whom he cannot mortally touch; *viz.* such as are born of God, and have a new creature, by that divine birth, the wicked one touches them not, (1 John v. 18.) *i. e.* not mortally, to make them sin unto death, as ver. 16. But if he can however have leave to touch them in their bodies, or external concernments, he will rather do that than nothing; ruin them he cannot, but he will afflict them as he can. Therefore is he said to go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; which is there meant, immediately, in reference to their external concernments, as will appear if you observe the context, 1 Pet. v. 8. For it follows in the 9th verse, Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren, that are in the world. 'Tis true, being uncertain of the event, he hath a further aim, to overthrow their faith, and by his roaring to fright them out of their religion; therefore 'tis said, Whom resist steadfast in the faith, defeat his final design. But as the means to his end, when he roars like a lion against any of the servants of Christ, it is with design to bring them into the most afflicted condition he can: that so he may, at least make them signify the less in that state of opposition wherein they are engaged against him, in the world. So you find the imprisonment of Christ's servants imputed to Satan, Rev. ii. 10. The devil shall cast some of you into prison, and you shall have tribulation for ten days, which some understand of the ten persecutions. Whatever the devil meant, God intended their trial, as 'tis there said, and the demonstration of the victorious power of the divine principle, their faith, and his Spirit in them, that being tried, it might be found unto praise and glory—1 Pet. i. 7. And we cannot but doubt he let Job come on the stage, as his champion to combat Satan, who was the prime author of his manifold calamities; his accuser first, and his persecutor afterwards. He accuseth him of want of integrity, Doth Job serve God for nought? (chap. i. 9.) and at the same time complains of his own want of power to come at him: Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? ver. 10. Whereupon, for the trial of Job's fidelity and patience, God puts all he had into the devil's power, his person only excepted, which as yet he must not touch; manifest therefore it is, the devil animated the Sabeans and Chaldeans to take away his oxen and asses, and to slay his servants with the edge of the sword; (ver. 14, 15, 18.) that kindled the fire in the lower heavens, that burnt up his sheep and servants; (ver. 16.) that raised the storm from the wilderness, that smote the four corners of the house, where his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking, and buried them in its ruins, ver. 18. And we are expressly told that it was the devil, upon his enlarged licence, that smote him with those venomous boils, chap. ii. 7. It was the devil that bound that daughter of Abraham eighteen years, Luke xiii. 16. It was the devil that brought upon the Christian church, the famed ten persecutions, under the pagan Roman empire, understood to be meant by the great red dragon, Rev. xii. 3. Whence, also, he wears that very name, ver. 9. The great red dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil, and Satan.—These are some of those efforts, amidst that darkness, wherein the devil hath and uses so great power. But yet further,

6. It is manifestly a far greater deliverance to be freed from his spiritual power, and the horrid effects thereof, than from that which he may use in reference to our outward concernments.

Therefore now, upon these mentioned considerations, on this former part of the text, that we may apply it suitably to our present purpose, these two things are to be asserted and evinced—1. That to be delivered from the devil's power, in external respects, is a real and great deliverance: But that—2. To be delivered from his power, in spiritual respects, is a much greater deliverance.

1. That to be delivered from the devil's power, in external respects, either personal or national, is a real and very great deliverance. We are to look upon that deliverance, which this day we more particularly commemorate, now almost a hundred years ago, as a defeated plot of the devil. It carries that manifest aspect with it to every eye, a contrivance formed, and designed to be executed, by the subtlety and power of the prince of the darkness of this world. I need not repeat the narrative of it, being sufficiently known to you, or may be read in our histories; but nothing can be plainer, than that here was a design and plot of hell and devils, contrived in the dark, and so to have been executed, till the execution itself should have brought it to light. For what darkness, but that of hell, could have so much fire in it? so much of destructive rage and fury? And though there was hazard in the undertaking to the instrumental actors, what did the devil care what became of them? If his main design succeeded, he had been a great gainer, and glutted his ravenous appetite; if it succeeded not, but turned upon the heads of the undertakers, he had been no loser, but only less a gainer, having some prey however to feed, but not satiate a devouring appetite, which must be eternally insatiable. And what can be more devil-like?

And what was the deliverance, by which God did again signalize this very day fifteen years ago, but a repetition of the same mercy? The same in substance, though different in circumstance. It was from the same enemy, the same invisible and the same visible enemy, that we were preserved then, and more lately since. And what is our continued peace and quiet hitherto, but the same mercy continued, under the care and conduct of our present sovereign? It is preservation from the same enemy, and from the powers of the same darkness, that we continue hitherto to enjoy. And this mercy is not only real, but great, both in itself great, and great in respect of what it encloses, and subserves. In itself, for it is preservation from a great enemy, the greatest in all the world: a daring one, that feared not to contend perpetually with the Almighty, and without hope of self-advantage; who loves mischief therefore for mischief's sake, and working with mighty power, and power that works in such darkness, as to us mortals

is impenetrable. And great in respect of what it encloses, and is subservient unto; for it encloses the precious Gospel of our Lord, yet continued unto us, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the gracious communications we partake in, by, and through them; and is subservient to their true and proper design. And therefore mercy, of that kind, ought to be looked upon as real, and very great, which way soever you consider it. We should therefore take heed of being guilty of so vile ingratitude, as not to commemorate, with a suitable impression upon our spirits, this sort of mercies, which were the foundation of the mercies we have in so long a course enjoyed; for former mercies are fundamental to later ones. The expression is very emphatical, and worthy our most serious regard, which we have, Psal. lxxxix. 2. For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever. And how is mercy said to be built up, but as former mercies are fundamental to later ones? Thus are the present mercies, that we enjoy this day, founded upon the mercies of former days, such as we ought joyfully and thankfully to recount, with delight and praise; remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High. But yet,

2. I must also note to you, that however we are to esteem mercies, of that kind, *viz.* deliverances from the external power of the prince of darkness, real, and very great mercies; we are yet to account deliverance from the spiritual power, exerted in that darkness, much greater. I hope all your minds and hearts will close with me in this, as soon as you hear it, it carrying its own light and evidence in itself. For if you do but compare the cases of them who have been all along the authors of those great calamities and miseries, to the inhabitants of this lower world, and especially to the church of Christ in it, with theirs that have been the sufferers, upon the most peculiar account; you cannot but say, the portion and lot of the sufferers is most unspeakably rather to be chosen. We know who have been the authors of those great calamities in the world, and in the church of God in it, for many ages bypast; the same who were to have been the authors of our intended destruction. And in taking a view of their case, let us consider both their character, and their doom; both which you may find set down together, in one place, viz. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12.

1. Their character, which is really enough to fright any man that is but master of his own reason, to see how and in what way they have abandoned and lost theirs, to behold men so stigmatized, as indeed they have marked out themselves: they whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power; here is the devil's power at work in them, the horrid cause of their stupendous dementation. The effects do follow: and by them in signs, and lying wonders, among all which wonders the greatest wonder is themselves; that the thing called man in them should be so metamorphosed, and transformed into so brutal and diabolical a monster! so destitute of understanding, so full of malignity, (as we shall further see, by and by,) and all deceivableness of unrighteousness. So far their character is continued, and it partly further follows, interwoven with some part of their present doom; as also their final doom is both interserted, and distinctly expressed. Therefore take into their character, their being under strong delusion, the energy of deceit, as the Greek signifies, to believe a lie; spoken indefinitely, to note that any the most absurd figment they can be imposed upon to believe, that God sends them, as belonging to their doom, we shall consider afterwards. And we might enlarge their character, by taking in from ver. 3. that they are apostates, such as were fallen away from a state of excellency; and spoken of as one person, from their oneness in spirit and design, as a man of sin, a son of perdition (capable of the active, as well as passive sense.) And ver. 4. who opposes, exalteth himself above all that is called God, sits in his temple, is worshipped as God. And ver. 8. the wicked or lawless one. This is their character that are, and have been, through many centuries of years, the authors of the miseries and calamities the church of God hath suffered, and partly doth suffer, and is endangered by at this day. In this their character, I shall take notice of two things.

1. Of the great infatuation that is upon their minds. 2. Of the monstrous degeneracy, not from Christianity only, but even from humanity too, that is to be found in the temper of their spirits.

1. The great infatuation that is upon their minds. It appears that they are under strong delusions, potent, efficacious ones, they are most effectually deluded. And of this I could give many instances, but shall content myself only with the mention of two.

1. That great fundamental wild conceit, which they have laid at the bottom of their whole enchanted fabric, by which one would wonder, how they could hope to impose on any part of the rational world, or could be imposed upon themselves, that all the power they claim, and use, to the disturbance of mankind, and oppression of the Christian church, they pretend to have by deputation from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and by succession from the holy apostle Peter. By deputation from Christ, as if they were his deputies, in doing such monstrous work as this! as if Christ had deputed them to destroy Christianity, to render it a ridiculous thing, by their inserted fooleries; and odious, by their barbarous cruelties. That he, who was the light of the world, should appoint them to overspread it with darkness! That he, who so freely shed his blood to redeem it, had commissioned them so copiously to shed human and Christian blood. To make even his church, the temple of the living God, a shambles and slaughter-house, and affright the rest of mankind from coming near it; who yet could be as little safe in declining it, if they were within the reach of their arm! What fearful havock did they make, unprovoked, in America, as soon as they could get any footing there; destroying multitudes of (towards them) harmless, innocent creatures, and who (as strangers) received them with all possible kindness, even to the number of no less than forty millions; as hath been acknowledged by some of their own historians. [b] Their kings and princes were put to death, with most exquisite torture, upon the unjustifiable pretence of their being infidels; but with design to make them confess their gold and treasure, which they did but suspect they concealed. By these inhuman cruelties they laid waste whole fruitful countries, and turned well-peopled lands into mere deserts. And what other tendency could this have, than to engage the nations of the earth against Christians, and Christianity itself, as a thing by no means to be endured in the world; and were such multitudes destroyed by Christ's direction, and to propagate the Christian faith! And what commotions, wars, and bloodshed did they introduce into that large country of Habassia, disturbing that quiet and peaceful empire, though Christian, only because it would not be Roman![c] And have we not reason to add the many horrid tragedies acted by them, more within our near notice, in the several parts of Europe, and in this kingdom particularly; and that all this should be pretended to be done by a power derived from Christ! in so open and contemptuous opposition to the laws and spirit of Christ! the design of his coming into this world! and the very genius and natural tendency of Christianity itself! The things themselves are full of black horror. But that they should be said to be done in that name, speaks the most monstrous impudence and infatuation! As if Christ had changed names with the devil, and laying aside that of a Saviour, had chosen to be called Abaddon, or Apollyon, the common destroyer of mankind. And having changed his mind, and his very nature, did now set himself to counteract and defeat the design for which he came into the world!

And that they have this power, by succession from St. Peter, is as idle and absurd a pretence. If he were their predecessor, they were sure very unsuitable successors. Did he ever go before them in such work? What precepts, what footsteps of his have they followed? Did he ever claim a power to annul, at his own pleasure, the laws and ordinances of his Master and Lord? to amass treasures, to accumulate dignities, acquire ample revenues, to dispose of crowns and sceptres, and, as he should think fit, to dethrone or unthrone the princes and potentates of this earth?

If he had such power, what is that to them? How came they by it from him? was it because he was bishop of Rome, that therefore the assumed, usurped name, without

b D. Barth. de l. Casas B. of Chiap.

c Of which see Ludolphus, and at large, D. Geddes Ethiop. hister.

the apostolical office, and the (inseparable) spirits, and spiritual power, acts, and design, could create them such? As well might the habit make a monk, or a beard a philosopher; by their fruits and works they are to be known. Our Lord reckoned himself sufficiently to have refuted their vain pretence, who gloried in being Abraham's successors, by telling them, So did not Abraham, John viii. 40. But all their learning, wit, and sophistry will never answer what hath been written,[d] to make it highly probable that St. Peter was never at Rome, much less sat twenty-five years there. It must therefore be a strong delusion must make them build so mighty a fabric, upon so infirm and weak a foundation.

2. The other thing I shall instance in, is their worshipping a piece of bread as a deity. What a strange infatuation is that, that one cannot distinguish a piece of bread from a god, or an object of worship! And to believe this against the most irrefragable reason, and common sense, and without any pretence from Scripture, more plausible than it would be to say, the sun in the firmament is a god, or that a buckler, which one turns with his hand this way or that, and wherewith men defend themselves in battle, is a deity, or an object of worship; because God is said in Scripture to be a sun and a shield: with a thousand like instances that might be given.

2. But we are to consider also, as we proposed, and as belonging to the character of these men, the monstrous degeneracy, not from Christianity only, but also from common humanity itself, that appears in the temper of their spirits. This depends upon the former, which could not be spoken of, without some excursion into this; but they are distinct things, and therefore the latter requires to be distinctly but briefly touched upon. And this depravedness of their spirits is that which is unspeakably more horrid, (if any thing can be thought to be more so,) that men, and who profess themselves Christians, could impose it upon themselves to be so barbarously bloody and cruel, to every one that is not so stupidly foolish in these things as themselves, that they would destroy all the rest of mankind, if it were in their power, for not agreeing with them in the same sentiments; though to agree with them, I must disagree with myself, and with all other men that have yet their reason and their senses left them, and the faith of Christians, in other points, most essential to religion. If I will not believe that they are deputed by Christ, as the successors of St. Peter, to do what they please, in secular governments, and religion; if I will not believe a piece of bread ought to be worshipped as God; I am to be tortured to death, for this my disbelief! which is so horrid a transformation of a human creature, as no power of thought can frame an idea of any thing more monstrous, throughout the world! *viz.* a Christian, because he is so, must be made the common butcher of mankind! to destroy as many human lives as he can reach! For if this treatment be for this reason deserved, it ought to take place to our utmost every where. Whence also is to be collected; that men might, had they not been Christians, have been sociable, kind, friendly, and have lived quietly and pleasantly with one another! So that Christian religion is the transforming principle, and obliges men to be the destroyers of their brethren, as much as in them lies; and with exquisite torment, that of burning alive, such as common humanity would abhor to use towards a beast. And besides, the tortures of their inquisition must be thought a thousand times worse than burning for an hour or two! And let now this matter be impartially considered, doth it not already appear, that the authors of such miseries and calamities to the rest of men, and the rest of Christians, especially such as are sincere, are in much worse case than the poor sufferers? We cannot but judge so, on the following accounts.

1. Here is a transformation of minds. The minds of men, of reasonable creatures, are transformed into the most horrid things; *i. e.* they are turned, excepting the mere human shape, (and every one that understands what belongs to the human essence, easily apprehends how little mere external shape doth, to the making of a man,) they are turned into ravenous wild beasts, into lions, tigers, bears, wolves, destroying and tearing in pieces whatever comes in their way. And do but consider, were it not a much more eligible thing to have the nature of man, the understanding of man, common humanity remaining, though the external shape were altered; than to have the shape of a man remaining, but to be in the temper of one's mind a tiger, a bear, ravaging and destroying wheresoever one goes? Such are set up as potents, prodigies, and as monitory signs, both to astonish mankind, that the impression may be deeper and more permanent; and thereupon to warn them, seasonably to repress the beginnings of any such disposition, fearing whither it may grow. And therefore to consider, with dread, how fearful a thing it is that there should be such a sort of creatures, in human shape, as can take delight in tormenting them that never did or wished them harm; as with pleasure can torture others, for no other cause but merely because they take the same liberty of thought, which as a common right themselves assume; and cannot be of their opinion, against common sense, and the common reason of mankind, and without pretence any way. If a man were to express his sense as to this matter, in a solemn prayer to the Almighty, would he not say: Lord, let me rather be the most monstrous deformed creature, in external shape, that ever was produced in this world; only let me have in me a right, nor give me up to a reprobate, mind! And what can we conceive more essential to man, than these two things, reason, and love; and both these are abandoned and lost, in those men whose character hath been given. Their reason and love do, at least, suffer the highest violation both together. They believe themselves, and would have all others believe, against the common reason and sense of men; and are become haters of mankind, otherwise than as they shall fall in with their absurd sentiments, and will be subservient to their cursed designs.

2. We shall easily be induced to look upon the author's case, as much the less eligible than the sufferer's, upon this further account; that this horrid degeneracy, and depravedness of spirit, is most entirely voluntary, and proceeds from their plenary consent with the devil, as an inactuating spirit in them. Such is the import of those tremendous words (that would make one shrug to thing of them)—that spirit that inworketh (or hath energy) in the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2. Their perfect voluntariness appears, in their most complacential self-approbation, under so direful a transforming change, from man, into part brute, part devil. Others feel in themselves some disaffections, and distempers of spirit, which they deplore, lament, and contend against. These men glory in their own shame, and what ought to make them a hissing,[e] and reproach to the nations of the earth, they applaud them for. They declare their sin, as Sodom, justify the prodigious deformities of their own spirits, write volumes to defend them, and put on a countenance, unaccustomed to blushing; as if in good earnest they expected other men should think their cause to be good! And to what a stupendous height doth this raise the horror of their case!

But hence also it is that the devil hath that access to the inward parts, into the more secret receptacles, and chambers of their souls; unto which he could have none, if their consenting will did not open him the door. Nor that there is any formal bargain or contract between him and them, for his power, you find, works in darkness; but he and they agree upon the same things, so doth the devil lead them captive at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26. The sufferers, in the mean time, are only such; and as they endure evils, in themselves incomparably less, they do but endure them; not being active to procure them, otherwise than by being and doing what they ought. And so they have, in their suffering, that great matter of relief and rejoicing, the testimony of their conscience, (2 Cor. i. 12.) besides the expectation of a glorious reward; while, for the authors of their sufferings, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, Jude 13. Which leads to the consideration of,

2dly, Their doom, (for hitherto we had chiefly considered but their character,) and this is partly present, partly final.

d In the Modest Inquiry, upon that subject; a work that, though anonymous, the author needed not be ashamed of: besides what hath been said by divers others.

e —— Populus mihi sibilat.

1. *Present.* That for the cause, God sends them strong delusions, (2 Thess. ii. 11.) not by active infusion of malignity, whereof, on God's part, there was no possibility, nor on their part, any need. They have enough of their own besides the addition of what that text notes, that their coming is after the working of Satan with all power. These are a sort of men abandoned of God, delivered over to Satan, under, whose conduct they have put themselves. A fearful case! They are, not by divine commission, but permission only, left in his hands; and now, the lusts of their father they will do, John viii. 44.

2. *Final.* That they all might be damned—A severe sentence! but justified by what went before, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; but struck off from the Christian religion, what should make it amiable and self-recommending, (and by what follows,) that they took pleasure in unrighteousness; hence they are left of God, in order to their future damnation. Not that God made any men on purpose to damn them; but when they had contracted such guilt, by sinning against the clearest light, against the law of their own nature, and against the law of Christ; they are damned, as having marked themselves out for hell, and the society of devils, whose associates and subjects they were before. And if it be said, of them who do evil that good may come, "their damnation is just," much more of them that love mischief for mischief's sake. And who would not now choose the tortures of a flaming fire, for an hour or two, rather than be turned into hell, to endure infernal flames for ever!

And we may add, (to show how much greater this spiritual deliverance is, than deliverance from the external powers of darkness,) that the fearful tragedies that these men act, being by the so manifest and immediate power of the devil, he is therefore most highly gratified, by having his will so far of them. Nothing could be more grateful to him, than to have made them his tools, his instruments, to fill the world and the Christian church with such miseries and calamities, as they are the voluntary authors of; and hereupon they will be the subjects of his triumph and scorn at last. And here, if you would but pause a little and consider, "What would I not rather choose, than to be the subject of the scorn and insultation of devils!" This is the case of this very generation of men. How will the devils insult over them! "See what fools I have made of so great a part of mankind, how ready have they been too serve me, and my most horrid designs! There is nothing that I would have them believe, be it never so absurd, but I could make them believe it; there is nothing so horrid to act, but if I bid them, they are ready to act it?" And how much the greater will the matter of their insultation be, that such could be found, even in the Christian world, that should be made to serve his vile and horrid purpose, and so render Christianity hateful to mankind! How hath the extent and growth of it, by this means, been hindered! And it can never spread, till it have another kind of representation than is given by this sort of men. And consider that, in opposition to what was last mentioned, from the spiritual power of the devil, which he acts in this darkness, all the sincere are truly, and shall be fully delivered; whereas from his external power they are many times not delivered. It is not ascertained to them, that they shall not be impoverished, that they shall not be cast into prison, that they shall not be put to death; but it is certain that Satan is dethroned in their souls, and that God will bruise him under their feet shortly, and they shall have opportunity and ground for eternal triumph, over all his power and malice. Therefore, upon all these accounts, this must be far the more eligible deliverance; though deliverance, in the former kind, is by no means to be made light of. They that are sincere, are sure at last of a most glorious victory over the devil. They shall overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony; not having loved their lives unto the death. And that is certainly the most desirable course and state, that hath the most desirable and valuable end.

And according hereto should the temper of our spirits be, in reference to such deliverance from the power of darkness, which we have occasion to make mention of, this day. We ought to remember, with great gratitude, our preservation from those efforts of this power, wherein it is exercised with reference to the external secular concernments of particular persons, and of nations, more especially our own. We have reason to bless God for that deliverance, that hath been wrought out for us in that kind; and that it hath been so often repeated, and so long continued. We ought to take much to heart the mercies of God herein. And although we are here met under somewhat a distinct character, to bear a part in the solemn thanksgivings of this day; we are not the less obliged to be very serious herein; and however, have for our part great reason not to expect any thing hard or grievous from such, differing from us, as understand religion; between whom and us, there is an agreement in all the substantials thereof. We have the same articles of doctrine, the same institutions of worship, and the same rules of life, conversation, and practice towards our sovereign, and fellow-subjects. And when there is so great an agreement, that which is left to be the matter of disagreement, can be only very little circumstantial things; and which they, from whom we differ, professedly call indifferent, not tending therefore, in themselves, to make either better men, or better Christians. And whereas some of us do not think so, throughout, that disagreement is, we hope, the rather to be pardoned, both because it is little, so little that there are few men of considering minds that, upon strict inquiry and comparing of thoughts, will not be found to differ in much greater things; and very consistently with most entire mutual love, or at least no design of hurt to each other. And yet the difference is real, and not to be dissembled, nor thrown off at pleasure; it being in no man's power, that would keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man, to form his judgment this way, or that, as he will.

And whereas there are churches abroad, and at home, wherewith we agree, and from which we differ, in these smaller things; we are not willing quite to disjoin ourselves from either sort, in which the substance is visible of our common religion; for they are, in their nature and kind, one and the same. Nor can we apprehend how a church, or a society formed for the purposes of religion, can be constituted, and distinguished for sole communion with that, and no other, by such things as are confessed, on all hands, to be no parts of religion; nor to have any necessary connexion with it. The more truly catholic the communion of Christians is, it is the more truly Christian. There is a mental communion, which is more intimate than merely local; which yet we cannot have, with them with whom we judge it unlawful to have actual, local communion, if there be occasion. But one may have both, wheresoever the essentials of Christianity do appear; not subverted by the addition of other things, that are inconsistent with any of those essentials: as the case is with them, whose black character hath been given, in this discourse.

But though we are not to expect hard things from friends, we are to remember the same common enemy, to them and us, is still in being, and hath great power in the world; and that prince of darkness, that animates them, is still powerful, and as full of mischief as ever. And we know not what advantages our too common iniquities may, from the justice of a righteous God, give the common enemy against us; whereupon we have no reason to be secure. If things therefore should be brought to that state, that Smithfield fires should be kindled again, so as that we shall not be delivered from that sort of the powers of darkness; let us labour to get into that good state, as to be able to bless God, even in the midst of flames, that we are delivered from the worst sort of the powers of darkness; that the prince of this world is dethroned in our souls, that he is judged there. And let us labour to have that temper of mind, towards such as may be the authors of those sufferings to us, that our love towards them may not be extinguished. Labour that every one of us may say from our hearts, Let them discover what hatred they will towards me, God forbid that I should not exercise true love towards them. If they curse me, I will bless them; if they despitefully use me, and persecute me, I will pray for them.

But we have also the second part of the text to be briefly reflected upon. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Our present limits allow us not to enlarge upon

this part. And it cannot but be thought reasonable, that this occasion being monthly, and often considered, the other but annual, and rarely returning, we should choose to insist more largely upon it. But how great a privilege is this translation, and how amazing! that it should be represented to us by so endearing an expression! "Because my Son is dear to me, I will take you into his kingdom. He is not so dear to me, but I can be very well contented to make you partakers of all the blessings that his kingdom carries in it."

And you know that there is no kingdom but what hath its particular laws, and statutes, and ordinances, and privileges belonging to it. There is one great ordinance, belonging to this kingdom of our Lord's, that we are solemnly to attend, the next Lord's day. If we look upon ourselves as not only delivered from the power of darkness, but translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, this is indeed a great privilege; but there is no such privilege which hath not its duty belonging to it. We ought to consider how we shall carry the matter upon this translation, being translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; and being to partake in the privileges that belong to his kingdom, how shall we deport ourselves suitably hereto, with what temper of spirit?

1. With an admiring temper of spirit, considering the state out of which we are delivered. He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, he hath turned us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. This is that I am sent for, saith the apostle Paul, as a Gospel minister, Acts xxvi. 18. To open your eyes, and turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Then into what a transport should it put us, to think that we should have been under the power of the devil unto this very day, the power of the prince of the air, that works in the children of disobedience, that works energetically, as the word signifies, his work in them hath an energy in it, Ephes. ii. 2. Oh frightful thought! to have such a horrid fiend lying continually in my bosom, preying upon the very vitals of my soul, leading me captive at his will! What the devil would have me be and do, that I was and did most readily!

2. We should recount, with great thanksgiving, our admission into this kingdom. Think we, first, whence we are delivered; and then into what state we are admitted, into the kingdom of his dear Son. Into what an adoring thankful frame should that put us, that our blessed God should translate us into his own Son's kingdom! You shall hereupon be so provided and cared for, as none else in the world are besides. He will watch over your spirits, your souls shall be bound up in the bundle of life; you shall have all the supports and comforts too, that, in infinite wisdom and love, he shall judge necessary for you, in this world; and at length be brought into the presence of the Divine glory, with exceeding great joy!

3. Consider that the particular ordinances of this kingdom of his, are aptly designed for your advantage. This that we are now to prepare for, is an ordinance belonging to that kingdom; I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, saith our Lord, Luke xxii. 29, 30. that you may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom. We are to eat and drink with him, in his kingdom; and that ordinance, wherein we are to eat and drink with him, is the emblem of what is there finally designed and meant, when we are to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

4. We should consider what faith is required, on our part, being come into such a kingdom, and having the privileges thereof secured unto us, by such a sealing ordinance. There ought to be no dubious thought of him, who so kindly invites us; especially when we are, in so friendly a way, eating and drinking together.

5. It is to be considered what fidelity is required of us. We are to swear fealty to the king of this kingdom. Never let it be said, we, that eat and drink at his table, have lift up our heel against him.

6. With what joy should we consider our state, in our approach to such an ordinance; we are received as friends to the King's table. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him, let the children of Zion rejoice in their King, Psalm cxlix. 2. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, thy King cometh, meek and lowly, Zech. ix. 9. How infinitely condescending, when he treats such as we for his welcome guests!

And take both the parts of the text together, and they will give us this two-fold hint of use.

1. Consider how solicitous we ought to be, till we know that we are got out of that dark and horrid kingdom, and brought into this kingdom of light and grace. When we know that these two kingdoms divide the world, and how fearful a thing it is to belong to the former, and how desirable a thing to belong to the latter kingdom; who would not be solicitous, till he knows that he is got out of that horrid kingdom, into this blissful one, and into so safe and happy a state? And how stupid negligence is it not to know or be concerned to what kingdom I belong! Dost thou not know who is thy king? whether the dear Son of God, or that accursed king, I hope you will labour not long to be ignorant, in a matter of so great concern, but drive it to a speedy issue.

2. With reference to both these, if you have a comfortable ground to hope that you are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; be serious in your thanksgivings, and endeavour to arrive at greater degrees of gratitude, that your hearts may be more warm and raised in your thanksgivings. And such thanksgivings ought to be gratefully expressed, in acts of mercy to the poor and needy. Blessed are the merciful, for they have received mercy, and shall receive it.

FUNERAL SERMONS.

A FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR THAT FAITHFUL AND LABORIOUS SERVANT OF CHRIST,

MR. RICHARD FAIRCLOUGH,

WHO DECEASED JULY 4, 1688, IN THE SIXTY-FIRST YEAR OF HIS AGE.

TO THE

REVEREND MR. SAMUEL FAIRCLOUGH, MR. JOHN FAIRCLOUGH, MR. GEORGE JONES, MR. RICHARD SHUTE, WITH THEIR PIOUS CONSORTS,

THE BRETHREN AND SISTERS OF THE DECEASED MR. RICHARD FAIRCLOUGH.

My worthy Friends,

It is, I apprehend, a grievous thing to you, to be destitute of the wonted solace you have taken in those your most delectable relatives, the father and the elder brother of a family, whereof you were the genuine or the ingrafted branches. Whether nature or choice gave you your interest, you had a common concern and comfort in it; and indeed, from a love too little common to the rest of the world. The love that hath so observedly flourished among you, and been your collective, unitive bond, as it hath shown itself to be of a higher than the common kind, demonstrated its own divine original, and that it had its root in heaven; so have its effects been a demonstration what such a love can do, for the cherishing of union, not only in a private family, but in the church and family of the living God also. And how little necessary it is unto a union, even there, that there be a sameness of sentiments and practices in every little punctilio; for a disagreement wherein, too many have thought themselves licensed to hate, and even destroy one another. As God himself was the fountain, so he was the first object of that love with you. And as your love to him caused your entire devotedness to his interest, so your mutual love united your hearts (according to your several capacities) in serving it; without grudging, or hard thoughts, that each one served it not exactly in the same way. By that love you have been undivided in your joys and sorrows, in reference to one another. While your very eminent father survived, how gladly did you pay a joint reverence and duty to him! what a glory was his hoary head unto you! This your worthy brother was the next resort and centre of your united respect and delight. I doubt not you feel your loss as to both, which (though God had made a former breach upon you) the longer continuance, as well as the pleasantness of the enjoyment, cannot but have made the more sensible unto you. We are somewhat apt to plead a prescription for our more continued comforts, but you know how little that avails against a statute, as that (for instance) by which it is appointed that all must die; nor is it to be regretted that the absolute Lord of all should pluck in pieces our earthly families, for the building and completing his own, in heaven.

What I have said of this your excellent brother, in the close of the following discourse, is but a small part of what you know. It serves for the solace of the survivors, not the advantage of the dead;* and the solace is real, and great, when imitation makes all that is commendable our own, and most intimate to ourselves. It is, otherwise, but a faint comfort to have been related to an excellent person; when a limb is cut off, the soul retires to the remaining parts. May a double portion of the spirit and life, which were so copious and vigorous in the deceased, abound unto you! And I should be very faulty, if I put not in for some share with you, who must profess myself a great sharer in your affliction and loss; and

Your very affectionate brother,
and servant in our Lord,

J. H.

* August. de cur. pro mort. gerend.

MATTHEW XXV. 21.

HIS LORD SAID UNTO HIM, WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT; THOU HAST BEEN FAITHFUL OVER A FEW THINGS, I WILL MAKE THEE RULER OVER MANY THINGS: ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD.

It may seem somewhat incongruous, and an indecency, that this memorial of our worthy friend, should be now solemnized so long after his very remains are gone from off the face of the earth. But two things concurred to make the delay necessary and unavoidable: *viz.* that his own desire, expressed in his will, limited the performance of this office to the person upon whom it now falls. And that my own great infirmities, before the time of his sickness and death, (which made it more likely he should have done this part for me, than I for him,) had obliged me to begin a course, for the repairing of languishing health, which required some weeks' attendance abroad, and which

could not be sooner over. But if our business were only to mourn and lament our own, and the more common loss, it were not yet too late. The mention of his name, the worthy Mr. Richard Fairclough, is enough to open fresh springs, calling to remembrance such a brother, such a friend, such a preacher of the word of life, as he was.

And it should do it most of all upon the most common account; whom would it not induce to mourn over this forlorn world, to see that every thing that is more excellent, more pure, more desirable, more capable of being useful in it, God is gathering up out of it? O how much of spirit and life is gone from it, when one such man dies! how are we to mourn over the world, as dying gradually the worst sort of death, when the holy, divine life is thus exhaled out of it, and is expiring by degrees! But come, we have somewhat else to do than mourn: all this tends to make a glorious heaven, one bright star the more is now added to it; there is nothing of this holy life lost; whatsoever of excellency, purity, goodness, life, loveliness, and love of that divine kind vanishes from among us, is but transferred to its own native place, returns to its proper element, as the forsaken dust hath to its own. Heaven hath its part out of every such person, the seat of all life, purity, and goodness; as the earth draws into its bosom its own terrene part, not without a sacredness, and a rich perfume adhering to that also. And as it is not our only or more principal business to mourn; so nor is it to relieve and fortify ourselves against mourning. We have somewhat to do, divers from them both, and that is more considerable than either of them. We are chiefly so to consider his death, as may best serve the purposes of our own yet-continuing life, which was the scope of that desire of his, signified by his will, that an instructive sermon might be (upon that occasion) preached to the people. We are to set ourselves to learn from it what doth most concern our own daily practice and hope; so to acquit ourselves as not to neglect the duty of good and faithful servants to our common Lord, nor to come short of their reward.

And to this purpose we are more to consider his life, than his death; the life which he hath lived on earth, and the life which (we have reason not to doubt) he doth live in heaven. Nor could my thoughts reflect upon any portion of Scripture more fit for our purpose, or that was more suitable to him and us, *i. e.* that could more aptly serve to describe him, and instruct ourselves; nor have I known any person to have left the world, within my time, to whom this text of Scripture might more fitly be applied. I shall only observe, and insist upon these two heads of discourse from it,—the character of such a servant, and—the treatment which he finds at last, from his heavenly Master.

I. His character. He is said to have done well, or 'tis said to him, εὖ, *well*, (no more is there in the Greek text,) and then he is further bespoken as a good and faithful servant, more generally, and particularly, his fidelity is commended in reference to the special trust and charge, which is implied to have been committed to him; Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I have not over-charged thee, and thou hast acceptably discharged thyself. Some think this (and the whole parable) to belong only to the ministers of the Gospel, the servants of Christ in that special sense. I do not see a reason for that restriction, the words are of themselves capable of being extended further, to the faithful servants of Christ, in whatsoever capacity; though being spoken to the disciples, as from the continuation of the discourse (with this evangelist) from the beginning of the foregoing chapter may be collected, it seems not unfit to allow them a more particular reference to their special office and trust. And here we must note that these words of commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant," do speak both the *truth* of the thing, and the *judgment and estimate* which his Lord makes thereof accordingly. We are now to consider them under the former notion, as they express the *truth* of the thing, the matter of fact, whereof we cannot have a more certain account than (as here we have it) from his mouth, who employed him, was his constant Supervisor, must be his final Judge, and will be his bountiful Rewarder at length. We shall here, in opening his character, note—First, some things leading and introductive, or that belong to his entrance into this service: and—Secondly, some things that belong to his performance, afterward.

First, For the introductive, supposed part of his character. He is,

1. One that hath disclaimed all former and other masters, all in co-ordination, for of such, no man can serve two; other lords had dominion over him, but by their usurpation, and his unjust consent, who was not his own, and had no right to dispose of himself. The faithful servant repents, and retracts those former engagements as bonds of iniquity, by which he will be no longer held, renounces any former inconsistent master, or service. A truly subordinate master, he must own, for the same reason upon which he acknowledges the supreme, and do all that such derived authority challenges, by his direction who gave it; otherwise, he hath learned to call no man master on earth.

2. He is one that hath, by covenant, surrendered and resigned himself to this great Lord, and his service. Some relations have their foundation in nature, this of servants to a master (we except slaves) in their consent, or in mutual contract. And though this general relation between God and man, have the most deeply natural foundation imaginable, whereupon all are his servants; yet the special relation must have the other ground, *viz.* that of consent, or contract superadded; not to give God a right to our service, but more expressly and effectually to oblige ourselves to it, and that we may have a right to his rewards. 'Tis but acknowledging and recognising his former right in us, which is part (and the initial part) of our duty to him. He requires and justly insists upon it, to be acknowledged as our only rightful Lord; which till we do, we are in rebellion against him, and in the condition of servants broken away from their masters, runaways, fugitives, and who keep ourselves out of the family; and though that cannot however destroy his right, yet it is inconsistent with our duty, for our service must be throughout voluntary; and with our reward, for nothing that is not voluntary is rewardable. Therefore the good and faithful servant in the text, is one that effects and chooses the state, first, and says with the Psalmist, (Psal. cxix. 38.)—Thy servant who is devoted to thy fear. And, (Psal. cxvi. 16.) O Lord truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds. He doth as is required, Rom. xvi. 13, 19. Yields himself to God, and all his parts and powers servants of righteousness unto holiness. He reckons it neither dutiful towards God, nor comfortable to himself, to do him only occasional service, but *ad libitum*, and as an unrelated person. He thinks it not honourable to the great Lord of heaven and earth, but to borrow (as it were) another's servant, nor can he satisfy himself not to be of the family; therefore he consents first to the relation, and enters himself his covenant-servant. Faithfulness supposes having covenanted, and hath the same reference to our part of the covenant, that God's faithfulness hath to his.

3. He is one that hath thereupon made it his earnest study to know his Lord's will. His first inquiry is, What wilt thou have me to do, Lord? he is solicitous to understand the duty of his station. Psal. cxix. 125. I am thy servant, give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. To enter oneself the servant of another, without any concern to know the business of his place, shows an insincere mind, and argues he hath more a design to serve himself upon his master, than to serve him.

4. He is one that hath an inclination to the work he is to do, when he knows it, a προθυμία, an inclining bent of mind to it: that which the Scripture means, by having the law of God written in the heart, spoken of our Lord himself, in reference to that peculiar service he was to perform; Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, thy law is in my heart, Psal. xl. 8. Who though he were a Son, yet taking the form of a servant, applied himself to that severe part assigned him, with a most willing mind; and had, hereupon, the highest approbation imaginable, Isa. xlii. 1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. And it is spoken of all the inferior true servants of God, besides, Jer. xxxi. 33. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. 'Tis the same thing with being God's workmanship, (Eph. ii. 10.) created unto good works; and with that readiness to every

good word, ἑτοίμους εἶναι, Titus iii. 1. If a man's heart be not so framed to God's service, how awkwardly and untowardly does he go about any thing that is enjoined him, he is habitually disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, Titus i. 14.

Secondly, And for that part of the character, which being a good and faithful servant includes,

1. He is one that endeavours to extend his obedience to the whole compass of his duty, hath a universal respect to all God's commandments, is not partial in the law.

2. He peculiarly minds the work most of his own station. Thinks it not enough or possible to be a good Christian, and at the same time an ill magistrate, minister, parent, master of a family, or servant in it, if it be his lot to be in any of these capacities.

3. He is diligent in all the service that belongs to him, any way; not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, Rom. xii. 11.

4. He is, with most delight, exercised in the most spiritual part of his work. In the great, vital acts of faith, love, self-devoting; and those most immediately proceeding from them, meditation, prayer, and praise.

5. He balks not the most hazardous or more costly part. Thinks it mean to serve God at no expense, or with what costs him nothing. Measures not his duty by the advantage or safety of his own secular interest; so as to decline it when nothing is to be got by it, or if any thing be in danger to be lost.

6. He grudges not that others are less exposed to danger, in their work, than he; and have that liberty of serving God, which he hath not. Let me seriously recommend this property and disposition, of a faithful servant, to my brethren in the ministry. While some have opportunity of serving our great and common Lord, without fear of the interruption and suffering to which we are liable, and when we have reason to judge they do it with sincerity, (though we may think they gained their greater liberty by their mistake,) there can be no more genuine expression of our fidelity, and sincere devotedness to our Master's interest, than to behold, with complacency, all the good which we observe done by them. If the great apostle (Phil. i. 15—18.) rejoiced, and declared he would rejoice, that Christ was preached, though not sincerely, (and whether in pretence, or truth,) much more should we, when we ought to judge that he is sincerely preached. And if he envied not those that preached Christ, even of envy, how horrid would it be, should we behold with envy, what we are to suppose done out of love, and good-will! They are great admirers of themselves, and lovers of some interest of their own more than his, that cannot endure to see his work done by other hands than theirs; or that have nothing of that disposition in them which those words express, Let him increase, and me decrease.

7. He is much less apt to smite his fellow-servants, or hinder them in their work unless they will work by his rule and measure, unprescribed by their Lord himself. He takes no pleasure to see the hands tied up of useful labourers in the harvest, wishes not their number diminished; but, because the harvest is really plenteous, but the labourers are few, rather prays the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest, Matt. ix. 37, 38.

If any, of their own private inclination, would have the necessary work of their Lord hindered, and take pleasure in the exclusion of industrious labourers, for their conscientious disuse of things, by their own confession, not necessary; good Lord! what spirit are they of? I understand it not, nor let my soul enter into their secret! I had rather a thousand-fold bear their anger, than be of their spirit! Would any faithful servant rather wish his master's work should be in any part undone, than done by those he dislikes; upon no more important reason than that their clothes, perhaps, are not of the same colour with his?

But thanks be to God that, among those that differ from each other in the lesser things, there are so many that rejoice, being under restraints themselves, for the liberty of others; and that mourn, while they enjoy themselves an ample liberty, for others' restraints, and among whom there is no other contention, but who shall think, and speak, and act with most kindness towards one another: and that not whole parties, but an ill mind and spirit, only in some persons, can be charged with what so much unbecomes faithful fellow-servants.

8. He is less at leisure to mind what others do, or do not, than what he is to do himself. Is above all things solicitous to prove his own work, that he may have rejoicing in himself, and not in another, Gal. vi. 4.

9. He esteems the utmost he can do but little, and counts, when he hath done his best, he is an unprofitable servant.

10. He approves himself, in all that he doth, to the eye of his great Master. Here we cannot serve too much with eye-service, or be too apprehensive of the constant inspection of our heavenly Lord. One may be too much a pleaser of men, but no man can too much study to please and approve himself to the eye of God.

11. He laments lost time, and labours to redeem it.

12. He greatly rejoices in the success of his work. If, for instance, it be his business to bring home souls to God, nothing is more grateful to him than to prosper in it. My beloved, my joy, and my crown—Phil. iv. 1. So he counts such as he can make proselytes to Christ. I have no greater joy, than to hear that my children walk in truth, John iii. 4. 'Tis said of Barnabas, (a great number believing, and turning to the Lord, Acts xi. 22, 23.) that when he saw the grace of God, he was glad; for ('tis added) he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost.

13. He loves his work, and his Master, is willing to have his ear bored, and serve him for ever. If any thought arises of changing, he presently represses it, by some seasonable check and counter-thought,[a] and confirms his resolution of cleaving to him unto the end.

14. He puts the highest value upon such present encouragements, from his Lord, as are most expressive of peculiar favour. The blessed God knows what is most suitable to the genius and spirit of his own new creature. They who are his sincere servants, are his sons too, born of him; and to the divine and heavenly nature in them those things are most agreeable that are most spiritual, and whereof others, of terrene minds, no more know the value, than that dunghill-creature did of the gem it found there; they must have great stores of corn, wine, and oil. His better born servants are of a more excellent spirit, and better pleased with the light of his countenance; he differently treats them accordingly. As that victorious Persian monarch, (Cyrus,) entertaining at a feast the principal men of his army, gave among them costly gifts; but for *Chrysantas*,[b] a more peculiar favourite, (ἐφίλησε προσαγαγόμενος,) he only drew him near to him, and gave him a kiss; which was intended by the one, received by the other, and envied by a third,[c] as an expression of more special kindness. And of the divine love, which that borrowed expression signifies, pious souls upon all occasions show their highest value, Cant. i. 2.

15. He trusts his master for his final reward, and is content to wait for it, as long as he thinks fit to defer. St. Paul professes himself a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, in hope of eternal life, which he that could not lie had promised; and hereupon resolvedly encounters all the difficulties of that hazardous service.

II. The acceptance, and reward which such a servant finds above. His acceptance is expressed in the same words (as was said) which have generally given us his character; not only showing what he was, and did, but that his Lord esteemed, and passes an approving judgment of him (as it was not to be doubted he would) accordingly. Concerning this judgment we are to note, both what it *supposes*, and what it *includes*.

It supposes both an account taken how this servant demeaned himself, and a rule according whereto the matters, to be accounted for, were to be examined and judged of.

1. That our Lord calls his servants to an account, so we

a As holy Mr. Herbert.

—Well, I will change the service, and go seek
Some other master out.
Ah, my dear God! though I be clean forgot,
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.

b Xen. de Ped. Cyr.

c Artabazus, who had a golden cup given him at the same time.

find it expressly said, ver. 19. After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And here 'tis implied, when he says, Well done—it implies he takes cognizance, and inquires whether they have done well or ill, he is not indifferent or regardless how they quit and behave themselves; nor doth he pronounce rashly and at random, without searching into the matter. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God, Rom. xiv. 12.

2. That there is some certain stated rule, by which their doings must be measured. Well-doing stands in conformity to some rule or other, and what is the next and most immediate rule of our duty, is also the rule of God's judgment; such a rule it must suppose, as according whereto a true judgment is possible of our having done well. That cannot be the law of works, according whereto no flesh can be justified in his sight; it must therefore be the law of grace: and so this servant is only said to have done well, according to the ἐυαγγελικὴ, *evangelica*. The *indulgence of the Gospel* can say, εὖ, it is well, to that which the rigour of the law would condemn. *Bonum oritur ex causis integris, &c. Well-doing arises out of the concurrence of all requisites, evil from any, the least defect;* and so indeed whatever the rule be, all things must concur that are requisite to acceptance, by that rule. But here simply every thing of duty is requisite, so that the condition of acceptance and life was not to be distinguished (as a thing of less latitude) from mere duty, in its utmost extent, Jam. ii. 10. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them, Gal. iii. 10.

2. This judgment includes,

1. Well-pleasedness, εὖ, 'Tis well, *q. d.* I like well thy way and work, it pleases and is grateful to me, and so art thou.

2. An acknowledgment of his title to the designed reward, according to the Gospel constitution. 'Tis said to be well, not only according to the absolute and abstract consideration of what was done; but according to its relative consideration and prospect to what was to ensue; and therefore follows, in the subjoined words, the collection of the reward, of which reward we have here a two-fold expression; I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

1. I will make thee ruler over many things. In the evangelist Luke's account of this parable (if this account refer to the same thing, as spoken at the same time, which some of old, upon the manifold diversity, have doubted, how reasonably I shall not here dispute) 'tis said, Have thou authority over so many cities. Either expression represents the remuneration here vouchsafed, by a metaphor which nearly approaches that very usual one, by which the felicity of saints is represented under the notion of a kingdom, *q. d.* Thou shalt have an honourable prefecture, be a glorious viceroy, shalt, according to thy capacity, share with me in the dignity of my royal state. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him, 2 Tim. ii. 12. This I pass, and shall stay a little more upon the other expression, which is plainer, and without a metaphor.

2. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Wherein, as expositors observe, our Lord slides insensibly out of the parable, into the thing designed by it; using words indifferently applicable to either, but such as wherein he might be easily understood ultimately to mean the joys and glories of the other world or state. Expressions serving to signify, as an [d] ancient speaks, τὴν πᾶσαν μακαριότητα, *the sum of all felicity*, as what can more fitly signify that, than joy, the joy of his Lord, and whereinto he was to enter? Let us consider these severally, though but briefly.

1. Joy, *q. d.* The laborious part is over with thee, now follows thy rest and reward. Joy, the very notion whereof is rest, *quies appetitus in appetibili*, [e] (as it is aptly defined,) *they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* When the dark shady vale is past over, with much toil, the path of life leads into that presence where is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore, Psal. xvi. 11. The fulness of joy speaks the purity of it, that is pure which is *plenum sui, &c. full of itself*, and without mixture of any thing else, which hath so entirely all degrees of itself, as not to admit the least degree of its contrary; such is this, 'tis joy, and no sorrow with it, perfect and most complete joy. This cannot, therefore, be meant of a slight and momentary act, but a perfect and permanent state of joy; which state is made up by the continual concurrence of a two-fold everlasting perfection, *viz.* objective, and subjective.—1. *Objective.* That there be a perfect and never-failing good to be enjoyed.—2. *Subjective.* That there be a perfect and immutable contemporation, or a thorough undecaying disposition of the subject to the enjoyment of it. From these two cannot but result a most permanent, everlasting state of joy. And of the concurrence of these two, the Holy Scripture sufficiently assures us, when it makes God himself to be the object of our eternal vision, in that other state; and tells us, that in order thereto, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is: signifying all that proportion and agreeableness of the blessed soul to the beatific object, which is requisite to a most pleasant, perfect, and perpetual enjoyment.

2. This joy is more expressly specified, by being called the joy of our Lord; which signifies it to be not only,—1. The joy whereof he is the object, a joy to be taken in him, (as before,) but,—2. Whereof he is the author. As he now puts gladness into the heart, Psal. iv. in this our imperfect state, he is not less the author of our most perfect joy. And—3. Also that, whereof he is the possessor, *q. d.* enter into that joy that is now to be common to me and thee, and wherein thou shalt partake with me. So one glosses the words: [f] Be thou partaker of the same joy with thy Lord, enjoy thou the same joy that thy Lord enjoys. Amazing thought! yet so Scripture speaks: Where I am, there also shall my servant be, John xii. 26. The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. And ver. 24. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me. And that beholding cannot mean a merely contemplative, but a fruitive intuition. If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together, (συνδοξασθῶμεν,) Rom. viii. 17. Other joys are in comparison mean and sordid, this is the highest and most excellent, for it is the divine joy.

3. 'Tis that they are to enter into; which notes both the plenitude of their right, their Lord bids them enter; and the plenitude of this joy itself, they are to enter into it; and the dominion it must for ever have over them, they are to be absorpt of it, lose themselves in it, not so much to possess it, as be possessed by it. And the perpetuity is intimated of that possession, we are told of their entrance into it, nothing of their passing out of it any more; the last thing we hear of them is, that they are gone into joy.

Now let us see what brief useful reflections are to be made upon all this. And,

1. How blessed a thing is it to be a faithful servant of Christ! if any have not yet learned to value his service for itself, let them make their estimate by the end of it, and by what is even at present most certainly annexed to it. To be accepted with him, to appear gracious in his eyes! An *Euge* from such a mouth! where the word of a king is, there is power. How joyful a sound do these words carry from the mouth of God: Well done, good and faithful servant! The Persic version (as it is rendered) most significantly paraphrases this passage: *The owner of the money received him pleasantly, and uttered words to him grateful to his heart, saying, Well done, O thou good and faithful servant, &c.*[g] What can be more grateful and reviving to the heart of a good man, than that the glorious Lord of heaven and earth should say to him, Well done! to have him say to us, as to Moses, Thou hast found grace in my sight; (Exod. xxxiii. 12.) to have gained this testimony, as Enoch did, (Heb. xi. 5.) that we have pleased God; and that our case might truly admit of such an angelical salutation, (though upon a less peculiar account,) Hail, thou that art highly favoured! how great a thing is it! So great a thing, in the apostle's account, that living or dying, being in the body or out of the body, seemed little things to him, in comparison of it: he was willing rather to

d Chrysost. in loc. e Aquin.
f Esto particeps, &c. Luc. Brugens. in loc.

g Dominus pecuniæ illum blande excepit, et cordi verba grata dedit: Euge, inquit, O bone et fidelis serve, &c.

be absent, but is more solicitous, whether present or absent, that he might be accepted of him, 2 Cor. v. 8, 9. Yea, and the more abject spirit of a very Cain resents so deeply his not being accepted, that his troubled mind imprints characters of sorrow in his face, shows itself in a fallen countenance, and dejected looks.

What ingenuous mind but knows how to value even the (unprofitable) kindness of a mean friend? Can the love of a God seem little with us? It adds greatly to the value of mere kindness, abstracted from beneficence, if it be borne me by a judicious, wise person; such a one honours whom he loves; we less esteem the love of a fool. There can be no greater contempt of God, than to make light of being accepted with him. But how transporting a thing should it be, besides the present sense of such acceptance, which (with more or less expressness) accompanies diligence and fidelity in his service, to have it judicially declared, with solemnity, and publicly said to us before angels and men, Well done, good and faithful servant! when so great consequences depend, and are to ensue upon it, as that it should be further said, Come, be thou ruler over many things, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, enter into the joy of your Lord. Who would think meanly of being the accepted servant of the most high God? They that finally despise so privileged a state, will see it with their eyes, (exemplified in others,) but shall never taste the sweetness of it.

2. How easily accountable is it why our Lord lets his servants suffer hard things in this world awhile! He may permit it to be so, who hath it in his power to make their sorrow be turned into joy. It is not strange if weeping endure with them for a night, unto whom such joy is coming in the morning; it is unworthy to repine in this case. 'Tis want of foresight that makes any wonder and censure. Consider well those weighty words, (1 Pet. iv. 12, 13.) Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

3. How wicked and foolish a thing is it to refuse this service! 'tis horridly unjust towards our most rightful Lord, and most imprudent for ourselves. Do men know what they do in this? whose right they invade and resist? and what cruelty they use towards their own souls?

4. How much to be lamented is the condition of the sinful world, who so generally decline this service, and make themselves slaves, in the mean time, to the worst of masters! how do men drudge to the devil! what slaves are they to themselves, and their own vile lusts! As indeed no man serves himself, but hath a fool and a mad tyrant (as one well says) for his master. We do not enough live up to the principles of our religion, while we consider not, with more compassion, the condition of infatuated mankind, in this respect.

5. What may be expected by unfaithful negligent servants that hide their talent in a napkin? The other's joys serve to measure their sorrows. What a killing word will it be, when instead of, Well done, good and faithful servant, it shall be said, Thou wicked and slothful servant! and instead of enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, they must hear, and feel, Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, ver. 30.

6. See what estimate we are to make of the nature of God, especially of his large, munificent goodness (which is his nature, God is love.) For consider the various emanations and discoveries of it, which may here be taken notice of.

1. That he should seek to have any for servants (which the text supposeth that he doth) in this world of ours! A world of apostate, degenerous, impure, impotent creatures, disaffected to him and his government, hating him, and (as in themselves they are) hateful to him. He who hath so little need of servants for any real use! who can do all things with a word! and if he thought it fit to have them for state, and as a thing becoming his majesty and greatness, is attended above by so excellent God-like creatures! so suitable, and obsequious! so powerful, and agile! those ministers of his that do his pleasure, hearkening to the voice of his word. A world of ministering spirits, that might be used for purposes less kind to us than they are! that he should seek servants among us! (for his having them implies it; whoever served him unsought unto?) invite men into his service, with so importunate solicitation! whom he might despise for their vileness, and destroy for their rebellion, which he can in a moment! And that he should seek such to become his servants, not with indifferency, but with so great earnestness! and use afterwards so various endeavours to retain them in his service! When they gradually decline, that he so graciously upholds them; when ready to break faith with him, and quit his service, that by so apt methods he confirms them; when they actually wander and turn vagabonds, that he should be so intent to reduce them! How admirable is all this! View the whole case at once. They neglect his first invitations, he repeats and inculcates them; they faint, he encourages and supports them; they revolt, he follows to bring them back; the cause of our admiration still rises higher and higher. How much is it, in this last instance, above all human measures! Most men would disdain so to sue to servants that forsake them, and are loth to confess their real need and want of them (were it never so great.) The Cynic [Sen.] scorned to look after his servant that left him, counting it a disgrace, when Manes thought he could live without Diogenes, that Diogenes should not be able to live without Manes. The all-sufficient Deity stoops to that, which indigency and wretchedness think even too mean for them!

2. Consider the frankness of his acceptance, even of the least. For how many omissions, how much laziness and sloth, how many incognitances and mistakes, how much real disservice must he forgive, when he accepts them, and says (yet) 'tis well done! How little is it they do at the best! and how unprofitable to him! and yet that little also he forms and even creates them to, and continually succours and assists them in it, works in them to will and to do, otherwise nothing at all would be done; and how full, how complacential his acceptance is!

3. Consider the largeness and bounty of his rewards, too large for our expression or conception. So that we even say most to it, when (even lost in wonder) we only admire and say nothing.

4. Consider the kind of the service which he thus bespeaks, accepts, and rewards. The best and most acceptable service, any are capable of doing him, is, when they accept him, take and choose him to be their portion, and blessedness. Trust, love, and delight in him as such, live upon his fulness, and (according to their several stations) persuade as many as they can to do so too. They that, in the most peculiar sense, are his ministers or servants, as they are more earnestly intent upon this, and win more souls, are the more amply and gloriously rewarded. They that turn many to righteousness, shine as stars. And for all the rest of his servants, wherein do they serve him most, but when by their converse, and example, they induce others to entertain good thoughts of God, and religion, and thereupon to make the same choice which they have made, and become seriously religious; which is most certainly connected with their being happy, and indeed, in greatest part their very happiness itself? And when they relieve, support, encourage, and help on those that are in the way, or whom they are endeavouring to bring into the way, of final blessedness! We as much need our servants, as they can us; they are our living, reasonable, but most necessary instruments. The whole universe of created beings subsists by mutual dependencies, the uncreated Being without any; creatures are made to need one another. Infinite self-fulness, not capable of receiving additions, is most highly gratified by our cheerful reception of its communications.

Let us learn now to conceive of God answerably to all this. We do him not right, that we consider not his admirable goodness, in so plain instances of it, with more frequent seriousness, and intention of mind and spirit, and show ourselves stupid, unapprehensive creatures. Have we a thinking faculty about us? a power to use thoughts? and can we use it upon any thing more evident, more considerable, or that more concerns us? or do we never use it le s pertinently?

7. How unreasonable is it, either to quit the service of our blessed Lord, or to serve him dejectedly! Quit it! Who hath more right in us? or where will we mend ourselves? O the treacherous folly of apostacy! and how severely is it wont to be animadverted on! 2 Chron. xii. 1. 'Tis said Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him; and what followed? Shishak, the king of Egypt, comes against them with a great power, and God sends them this message, by Shemaiah the prophet; that because they had forsaken him, (ver. 5.) therefore he also had left them in the hands of Shishak. And afterwards, that though, upon their humbling themselves, he would not quite destroy them, but grant them some deliverance; yet he adds, Nevertheless ye shall be his (*i. e.* Shishak's) servants, that ye may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries, ver. 8. Since they would abandon God, and the true religion, he would, by a very sensible instruction and costly experience, teach them to distinguish, and understand the difference, and make them know when they had a good master. And if we serve him despondingly and with dejected spirits, how causeless a reproach do we cast upon him, and his service! 'tis a greater iniquity than is commonly considered, implies dislike of his work, and the rules and orders of the family, impatiency of the restraints of it, distrust of his power to protect or bounty to reward us; and we may expect it to be resented accordingly. So we sometimes find it hath been, Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things, and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

8. How are we concerned to follow the example, and expect the acceptance and reward, of any such faithful servant of Christ! And that we may imitate such a good and faithful servant, let me briefly set the example of such a one before you, in this excellent person lately taken from among us; which, were it possible to represent entirely, were one of the fairest copies to write after, that this, or perhaps many former ages could afford us. That indeed, which it is fit should first be noted of him, is least of all imitable; I mean his natural temper, (with its more immediate dependencies,) which no man can have the privilege to choose. His indeed was one of the happiest that I ever knew, and did so set off all that was superadded and inserted into it, by human culture or divine grace, as an advantageous setting doth the lustre of a diamond. He had all the advantages of education from his childhood, which the pious care of an affectionate, prudent, learned father could give him, that were proper and preparatory to the function he was intended for; *viz.* that of the sacred ministry. An office whereof his excellent father (the eminent, holy, heavenly, reverend, ancient, Mr. Fairclough, of Suffolk, whose name in that country hath still a grateful savour with all good men, of whatsoever persuasion) showed his high esteem and love, not only by the most diligent discharge of it himself, but by dedicating all his sons (which were four in number) to it; and giving his two daughters in marriage to such also. So that he was the father of a sacred tribe, an offspring and race of ministers, or that (even naturally) united with such. This was the eldest of his children, and of whose education the first care was to be taken. Scarce any mind could be more receptive of the proper impressions, from an ingenuous institution. About twelve years he continued a student (whereof divers, a fellow) and great ornament of Emanuel-College, in Cambridge, as he was also much adorned by it. He went from it furnished with such a stock of rational, substantial, as well as polite literature, that showed him to have been no loiterer there. He was a man of a clear, distinct understanding, of a very quick, discerning, and penetrating judgment, that would on a sudden (as I have sometimes observed in discourse with him) strike through knotty difficulties, into the inward centre of truth, with such a felicity that things seemed to offer themselves to him, which are wont to cost others a troublesome search. Nor were his notions merely book-learned, borrowed from systems, and taken on trust, but formed by a due (but more speedy) comparing of things; as if truth were more akin and connatural to him than to most others, sooner digested, made his own, and inwrought into the temper and habit of his mind. Which afterwards, he liked not to muddy and discompose by busy agitations with others, about that truth which he found himself in a pleasant secure possession of; nor to contend concerning that which he had not found it necessary to contend for. He declined controversy, not from inability, but dislike; for as he less needed it for a further good end, so he was most remote from loving it for itself; he was satisfied to have attained his end, and was better pleased to know, than to seem to others that he knew. He was of curious sublime fancy, and a lofty style both in speaking and writing even in his most familiar letters; though he industriously depressed it, in his popular sermons, and other negociations with those of meaner capacity.

But his moral and holy excellencies were his chief lustre, being in themselves of a more excellent kind, and shining in him in a very eminent degree. The bent of his soul was towards God. I never knew any man under the more constant governing power of religion, which made it be his business both to exercise and diffuse it to his uttermost. He was a mighty lover of God and men, and being of a lively active spirit, that love was his facile, potent mover to the doing even of all the good that could be thought (in an ordinary way) possible to him, and more than was possible to most other men. To give a true succinct account of the complexion of his soul, he was even made up of life and love. Such was the clearness and sincerity of his spirit, his constant uprightness and integrity, so little darkened by an evil conscience, (and indeed, little overclouded with melancholy fumes,) that he seemed to live in the constant sense of God's favour and acceptance, and had nothing to do but to serve him with his might; whence his spirit was formed to an habitual cheerfulness, and seemed to feel within itself a continual calm. So undisturbed a serenity hath, to my observation, rarely been discernible in any man; nor was his a dull, sluggish peace, but vital and joyous; seldom hath that been more exemplified in any man, (Rom. viii. 6.) To be spiritually minded is life and peace. Seldom have any lived more under the government of that kingdom, which stands in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17. His reverence of the Divine Majesty was most profound, his thoughts of God high and great, that seemed totally to have composed him to adoration, and even made him live a worshipping life: he was not wont to speak to God, or of him, at a vulgar rate, he was most absolutely resigned and given up to him; devotedness to his interest, acquiescence in his wisdom and will, were not mere precepts with him, but habits. No man could be more deeply concerned about the affairs of religion, and God's interest in the world; yet his solicitude was tempered with that steadfast trust, that it might be seen the acknowledged verities of God's governing the world, superintending and ordering all human affairs, by wise and steady counsel, and almighty power, which in most others are but faint notions, were with him turned into living sense, and vital principles, which governed his soul! Whereupon his great reverence of the majesty of God, falling into a conjunction with an assured trust, and sense of his love and goodness, made that rare and happy temperament with him, which I cannot better express than by a pleasant seriousness. What friend of his did ever, at the first congress, see his face but with a grave smile? When unexpectedly and by surprise he came in among his familiar friends, it seemed as if he had blest the room, as if a new soul, or some good genius, were come among them.

I need not tell them that survive, who were nearest to him, how pleasant a relative he was, nor doth any man need to tell me how pleasant a friend! No man ever more understood, than he, the ingenuities and delights of friendship, especially the high pleasure of gratifying and obliging another; the relishes whereof were so delicious to him, that no festival could be so grateful to any man as the opportunity was to him of making another taste and feel his kindness. Nor did I ever observe any thing so like a frequent fault in him, as an aptness to overvalue his friend. He was a man of most punctual scrupulous fidelity, his word was ever with him so strictly sacred, that, in the

smallest matters, his appointments, though numerous, were through his great prudence so sure, that one might, without the intervenience of extraordinary providence, as certainly expect them, as the returns of day and night. So that they that knew him, though most delighted with his society, were never wont to urge for his stay with them, beyond his prefixed time, (which he commonly mentioned at his first entrance,) knowing it would be in vain.

He was of a large and great soul, comprehensive of the interests of God, the world, the church, his country, his friends, and (with a peculiar concernedness) of the souls of men, ready to his uttermost to serve them all: made up of compassion towards the distressed, of delight in the good, and of general benignity towards all men. He had a soul, a life, a name, darkened with no cloud but that of his own great humility, which clouded him only to himself, but beautified and brightened him in the eyes of all others: an humility that allowed no place with him to any aspiring design, or high thought, that could ever be perceived by word, look, or gesture; except the high thoughts and designs which neither ought to be excluded, nor repressed. His greatest ambition was to do good, and partake it in the highest and the best kind of it; to make the nearest approaches he could to the pattern and fountain of all goodness. And now looking upon so qualified a person, as engaged by office in a peculiar sort of service to Christ, to gather and draw in souls to him, and prepare them for a blessed eternity; how great things may we expect! What do we not find? Mells in Somersetshire was his first and only (public) station. Thither he was brought, by so peculiar a conduct and direction of Providence, as seemed to carry with it some signification what great use he was afterwards to be of, in that place. The very reverend Dr. Whichcot, being also at that time fellow of the same college in Cambridge, and presented to a living in that country, that was in the disposition of that college; obtained of him to accompany him in a journey to visit, and make some trial of the people, he had been designed to take the charge of. Where that so accomplished person expressed a resolution fit to be exemplary to others, of profoundest learning, (and which was strictly afterwards followed by this his chosen companion,) preaching his first sermon (as himself was pleased to tell me) upon those words, I determined to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. After some time spent together here, the Doctor's affairs recalling him for the present to Cambridge; he prevailed with our worthy friend to stay behind, and supply his absence among his people.

What follows, I was informed of by another hand, but one so nearly related to this our deceased friend, and so well acquainted with the more desirable occurrences of his life, as not to leave me in doubt concerning so momentous a thing, as how he came to be settled in a country so remote from his own, and where he was so mere a stranger. And it fell out thus. During his abode upon this occasion, in those parts, a noted gentleman, the patron of the rectory of Mells, being at that time high sheriff of the county, sent to Mr. Fairclough, (of whose worth, fame had not let him long be ignorant,) desiring him to preach the assize sermon; some circumstances having also brought the matter within so narrow a compass, that the straits of time made it necessary to press the request with more importunity than could admit of a denial. That performance was so highly acceptable, and so newly over, when the patron was surprised by the tidings of the former rector of Mell's death; that he immediately told our worthy friend, he could not otherwise so fitly gratify him for his sermon, as by conferring upon him such a living, which, if he pleased to accept it, was his.

The opportunity of stated service, in a calling to which he had most seriously devoted himself, more than the emolument, (as did afterwards sufficiently appear,) soon determined his thoughts, and fixed him in this station. There he shone many years a bright and a lively light, a burning as well as a shining one; it was soon observed what a star was risen in that horizon, and a confluence was quickly gathered of such as rejoiced in the light of it, which made an obscure country village soon became a most noted place; from sundry miles about, thither was the great resort, so that I have wondered to see so thronged an auditory as I have sometimes had the opportunity to observe in such a place, that did usually attend his most fruitful ministry. And O how hath that congregation been wont to melt under his holy fervours! His prayers, sermons, and other ministerial performances, had that strange pungency, quickness, and authority with them, at some times; that softness, gentleness, sweetness, alluringness, at others; that one would think it scarce possible to resist the spirit and power wherewith he spake. And the effect did in a blessed measure correspond; they became a much enlightened, knowing, judicious, convinced, reformed, even somewhat generally, and in good part a seriously, religious people. His labours here were almost incredible. Beside his usual exercises on the Lord's day, of praying, reading the Scriptures, preaching, catechising, administering the sacraments, (as the occasions or stated seasons occurred,) he usually five days in the week, betimes in the morning, appeared in public, prayed, and preached an expository lecture upon some portion of the Holy Scriptures, in course, to such as could then assemble, which so many did, that he always had a considerable congregation; nor did he ever produce in public any thing, which did not smell of the lamp. And I know that the most eminent for quality and judgment, among his hearers, valued those his morning exercises for elaborateness, accuracy, instructiveness, equally with his Lord's-days sermons. Yet also he found time, not only to visit the sick, (which opportunities he caught at with great eagerness,) but also, in a continual course, all the families within his charge; and personally and severally to converse with every one that was capable, labouring to understand the present state of their souls, and applying himself to them in instructions, reproofs, admonitions, exhortations, and encouragements, suitably thereto: and he went through all with the greatest facility and pleasure imaginable; his whole heart was in his work. Every day, for many years together, he used to be up by three in the morning, or sooner, and to be with God (which was his dear delight) when others slept. Few men had ever less hinderance from the body, or more dominion over it; a better habited mind and body have rarely dwelt together. No controversies arose among his neighbours, within his notice, which he made it not his business to get presently composed; and his help and advice was wont to be sought by persons of eminent rank, and in matters of very great difficulty, and importance, for that purpose. His own love of peace always inclining him, and his great prudence well enabling him, to be exceedingly useful, in any such case. Nor were his labours confined within that narrower verge, his name and worth were too well known abroad, to let him be engrossed by one single parish; in how many places did he scatter light, and diffuse the knowledge of God, wheresoever, within his reach, the opportunity of a lecture, occasional or fixed, did invite!

The state of things, in those days, making it necessary (and not hindering) that what was to be done for the preservation of common order, must be by the spontaneous associating of the pastors of many congregations; how did he inspirit those assemblies! The deference that was given to him, even by very reverend persons of great value, and much exceeding him in years, with the effectual influence he had upon all their affairs, (manifestly aiming at nothing but the promoting of religion, and the common good,) were only arguments of the commanding power of true worth. And the good effects upon the people, showed how much could be done by a naked, undisguised recommendation of oneself to men's consciences, in the sight of God. Nor would his brethren, of greatest value, (and divers there were, in those parts, of very great,) think it any detraction from themselves to acknowledge much more to the wise, modest, humble activity of his spirit, in their common concernments, than I shall be willing to arrogate to him. He was, upon the whole, a very public blessing in that country, while he kept his public station in it; and when the time approached of his quitting it, he eminently showed his constant, great moderation in reference to the controverted things, that occasioned his doing so, in all his reasonings with his brethren about them. And it further appeared, in the earnest bent of his endeavours to form the minds of his people, as much as was possible, unto future union, under the conduct of whoso should succeed

him, in the serious care of their souls; and to a meek, unrepining submission to that present separation, which was now to be made between him and them; whereof the extant abridgment of sundry his later sermons to them are an abundant testimony; though such a repression of their sorrows it was not possible to them to receive, otherwise than as dutiful children are wont to do the exhortations of an affectionate, dying father, not to mourn for his death. In the substantial things of religion, no man was more fervently zealous; about the circumstantials, none more cool and temperate.

But he could in nothing prevaricate with his (once settled) judgment, or depart in his practice one ace from it; yet such was the candour and softness of his spirit, that nothing could be more remote from him, than to pass any harsh censures upon those that received that satisfaction in the scrupled points, which he could not; but he continued a most entire undiminished friendship with many of them (and several of eminent note, by whom also it was equally cherished, on their parts) even to the last. His great contempt of the world, and remoteness from making the sacred office subservient to secular interest, a design of enriching himself by it, or more than to subsist, too soon appeared in the mean condition to which he was brought, by that deprivation. For though the annual profits of his living were very considerable, yet his free (but well regulated) hospitality, and large diffusive charity, (wherein his excellent consort, one of the most pious, prudent, well accomplished matrons I ever knew, most readily concurred with him,) kept them from being superfluous, or flowing into coffers. He had laid no treasure, but in heaven; and was the son of a no way unlike father, from whom the expectancy of a patrimonial estate could not be great; and whom (to his no small joy while he continued) he survived but a little. So that for some years (as I have heard him say) he did owe much of his subsistence to the bounty of some worthy citizens of London, whose temper it is to take more pleasure in doing such good, than in having it told the world who they were. His usefulness was such, since his deprivation, (not in serving a party, a thing too mean and little to be ever thought of by him, without disdain; but,) in pressing the great, and agreed things, that belong to serious, living religion; that it even melts my soul to think of the overwhelming sorrows wherewith the tidings of his death must have been received, by multitudes in the west, that were often wont with greatest delight and fruit to enjoy his most lively, edifying labours.

His decease confirms it to us, once more, that nothing, belonging to this world of ours, is too good to die. But it is a great argument of God's kind propensions towards it, and speaks much of his good-will to men, that now and then such heavenly creatures are permitted to inhabit it, and such *specimina* and efforts of the divine life to appear, and be put forth in it. It shows God hath not forsaken the earth, and that his tabernacle is with men, when any such are to be found here.

h Chrysost. Panegyr. i Philogonius.

It ought to be reckoned very monitory, and a great rebuke, when such are (earlier than according to natural course) taken away. It should make us love heaven so much the better, that such as he are gathered thither; not that it needs any thing to better it in itself, but that we can now better relish the thoughts that arise out of our own present knowledge; and having seen true goodness exemplified, may thence more easily take our advantage to apprehend what that state is, wherein there will be so vast a collection of excellent creatures, so perfectly good, by most liberal eternal participations from the first and uncreated good. How taking is this notion of heaven! I especially pronounce this holy man blessed, saith a great man in the ancient church, speaking of an excellent person deceased,[i] for that he hath passed from one order to another, (μετατάξατο,) and leaving our city, hath ascended to another city, even that of God himself; and leaving this church of ours, is gone into the church of the first-born who are written in heaven; and hath left our solemn conventions for that of myriads of angels; referring to that of the apostle, Heb. xii. and magnifying (that πανήγυρις) that glorious convention, not for the multitude of the powers above only, but for the confluence of the good, with a perfect vacancy of envy, and an abounding perpetual joy and satisfaction of mind—love, peace, goodness, &c. and every fruit of the Spirit in most plenteous fulness, (to this purpose he speaks,) and what an amiable heaven is this!

Yea, and it may incline us to have somewhat the kinder thoughts of this our meaner native element, and less to regret that our earthly part should dissolve and incorporate with it, to think what rich treasure, what shrines of a lately inhabiting deity, (now become sacred dust,) it hath from time to time received, and transmuted into itself. How voluminously have some written of *Roma Subterranea*[k] of the tombs of martyrs, and other excellent persons, (as many of them were,) collected in one little spot of this earth! And if there were as particular an account of the more refined part of the subterraneous London, much more of all places where just and holy men have dropped, and deposed their earthly tabernacles; how would our earth appear ennobled (and even hallowed) by such continual accessions to it, in all times and ages? What a glorious host will arise and spring up, even out of one London! Is not the grave now a less gloomy thing? Who would grudge to lie obscurely awhile, among them with whom we expect to rise, and ascend so gloriously? It should make us diligent in the remaining time of our abods here; what should not the expectation of such a welcome carry us through? Well done, good and faithful servant, &c. How studious should we be, so to acquit ourselves, as he hath done? Blessed is that servant whom the Lord, when he comes, shall find so doing. Let us then be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

k Jo. Severanus, P. Aringhus, &c.

A SERMON

ON THE MUCH LAMENTED DEATH OF THAT REVEREND AND WORTHY SERVANT OF CHRIST,

MR. RICHARD ADAMS, M. A.

SOMETIME FELLOW OF BRAZEN-NOSE COLLEGE IN OXFORD, AFTERWARDS MINISTER OF SAINT MILDRED, BREAD-STREET, LONDON, MORE LATELY PASTOR OF A CONGREGATION IN SOUTHWARK,

WHO DECEASED FEBRUARY 7TH, 1697-8.

TO MRS. ANNA ADAMS, WIDOW, AND COLONEL JOHN ADAMS, BROTHER, TO THE DECEASED MR. RICHARD ADAMS.

MY HONOURED FRIENDS,

DEATH is too common a theme, and too obvious to our sense, to be thought strange, any more than that we live. But that the course of our life, as to the rise, progress, and period of it, is at the dispose of one common Lord of all, because it belongs to a sphere above sense, is little considered by the most. To you, I doubt not, it's far from being a new or unfamiliar thought. And thereupon, that the precious life you have lately seen finished, was measured by him who could not therein be unkind to him who is gone; or to you who stay behind.

We do, indeed, tempt ourselves, if we expect from his kindness unreasonable things. As that he should, to gratify us, alter the course of nature, or recall the universal commission of death, or only let it stand in force with an exception, as to ourselves, our relatives, and friends, or that he should tear his own most inviolable constitutions; by which the present state is to be but transitory, and the future the only fixed state; which were to subvert the whole frame of religion, to nullify the design of redemption, to take down his tribunal, to abolish and lay aside all thoughts of a judgment to come, and finally to make the kingdom of his dear Son to terminate in a dunghill. While no such wish hath place with you, your reconciliation is easy to the providence that hath for the present bereaved you of so delectable a relation. And the love of God, which, prevailing in you, will prompt you to compliance with his will, must be the evidence of your title to the best blessings of both worlds. For both the things in the other state, the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, &c. And the concurrent operation of all things for good in this present state, do all belong to persons of the same character, the lovers of God, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Rom. viii. 28. Which that you may constantly and fully experience to the end, and in the end, is the serious prayer, for you, of,

Your very respectful
and affectionate servant in Christ,
JOHN HOWE.

PHILIPPIANS I. 23.

HAVING A DESIRE TO DEPART, AND TO BE WITH CHRIST; WHICH IS FAR BETTER.

IF you should have no other subject for your present consideration, than only, that one in your neighbourhood is lately dead; even that itself would deserve your very serious thoughts. The translation of human souls from world to world, and out of this present into their eternal state, is no light matter; and does claim and challenge more serious thoughts, than it is commonly wont to find and meet with. Nor does the commonness of such an occasion at all excuse the slightness of men's thoughts upon it; but rather aggravate it unspeakably more. That which we find to be so common and universal a case, we may be sure will shortly be our own: and as it is now matter of discourse with us, that such a one is dead, we shall, ere it be long, according as we have been more or less regarded in the world, be a like subject of discourse to others. But it is a greater thing, when it can be said, a good man is gone; there is a more special remark to be put upon the decease of such a one, Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, the end of that man is peace, Psal. xxxvii. 37. There is that agreement between his way and his end, they are so much of a piece, and do so exactly correspond; a course transacted in a constant serenity and peace, meeting at length with peace as the end of it; an even course, still, uniform, self-agreeable, ever equal to and like itself, ending at last in peace: Mark this! how he goes off, mark such a life so ending! But it yet challenges more intense consideration, when such a one is taken away from amongst us, and the progress and period of his course come to be viewed together, whose life was a continued series of labours in the Lord's vineyard, from the earlier to the later hours of his day; when such a one has finished his course, and fought out the good fight of faith, and is entered into his rest; by the vouchsafement of his indulgent Lord and Master is made to rest from his labours, and receive the reward of them, the reward of grace, with a Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord!

And sure it cannot be ungrateful to you, to be desired here to stay a little, to make a stand, and pause, and entertain yourselves awhile with the consideration of such a

theme and subject as this. Especially it cannot be an ungrateful contemplation, to such as have known the doctrine, and purpose, and faith, and charity, and manner of life, of such a one, as the apostle speaks; so as to be told of nothing, but what you knew before: and so they are not dubious and uncertain thoughts, that you are to employ upon such a theme; you are well assured of the truth of the fact, and when you know it to be true, you cannot but discern it to be very considerable and important truth, and of very great concernment to you. What the spirit of such a one has been through his whole course, you have a very high example of in this blessed apostle; and a copy has been written out fair, after such a pattern, by this lately deceased worthy servant of Christ. Besides the many straits and difficulties that great apostle met with in the course and current of his time, he meets with this towards the end of it, to be in a strait between two, and he does not know what to choose, *viz.* between these two things, the consideration of what would be the best and most valuable good to himself; and the consideration of what would be the more valuable good unto the Christian church; and particularly unto these Christian Philippians, to whom he now writes. He had no doubt at all in the case, but that to depart, and to be with Christ, would be the best and most valuable good to himself: and it was as little to be doubted of, but that his continued abode and stay in this world, would be much more a valuable good unto the Christian church; and unto this or that church in particular, that had enjoyed, and might further enjoy, his most fruitful labours. His difficulty and strait was not either what was best for him, or what was best for them; but which of these two he should, upon the whole, prefer; whether he should prefer his own private interest, or prefer the common interest of Christ in the world. And upon weighing and pondering the matter with himself, he does prefer the latter, so as, without any kind of hesitation to express a great complacency in it, that he should be continued yet longer, some time longer, for common good, in this world. And it was a most noble piece of self-denial that was exercised herein, if you consider what the apostle's privileges had been. He had been caught up into the third heaven, he had there seen unutterable things; nor could he doubt his interest in the felicity and glory of the heavenly state. On the other hand consider, his life here on earth was no voluptuous life, it was not a life of ease and pleasure. See the account that he gives of it in 1 Cor. iv. and 2 Cor. vi. and in chap. xi. of the same epistle. And to find, amongst how many deaths he conversed as it were every day of his life, how familiar labours, and fastings, and watchings were to him; yea stripes and imprisonments; and that he was now at this time a prisoner, as we see in some foregoing verses of this very chapter, *viz.* ver. 13, 14, 16. even in the very lion's paw, in the continual expectation of being devoured, and not long after to be offered up, as he elsewhere speaks. Yet he seems to take great complacency in the thoughts of having some addition made to his time in this world, on the common Christian account; and that his own blessedness and glory should be, for this reason, a little while deferred; he was patient of this, he could endure it, out of his love to Christ and the souls of men. But as to himself, for what he esteemed, and desired accordingly, as his best and most valuable good, he was in no hesitation or doubt concerning that; but pronounces without any more ado, that he did desire to be dissolved, or depart, (the words may be read either way,) and to be with Christ, which is far better; only he distinguishes what was his own most valuable good, and what was the most valuable good of the Christian church. And though he give this latter the preference, as in itself the more considerable thing; yet as to himself, and his own concerns, to depart, and be with Christ, he reckons far better: and accordingly he did desire it as such, as better for him; as having nothing to detain him, or nothing which, on his own private account, he could so much mind or covet, as that.

Now in this comparison, 'tis this one side of it which the words that I have read to you do call us to consider, and confine us to at this time. As to that other part, it lies within the compass of the context, but not of the text; and so we shall not treat of that at present: but consider, what is the genuine temper and disposition of a Christian, and more particularly of a minister of Christ, in reference to what he is to eye and look upon as his own best and most valuable good; and that is, to depart, and to be with Christ. This indeed the apostle speaks of himself, a great and eminent minister of the Gospel of Christ. But though this temper and disposition of spirit was agreeable, it was not appropriate, to such a one. It is indeed very agreeable, it is very suitable to the spirit of a faithful minister of Christ in reference to himself, and any interest and concern of his, to desire to depart, and to be with Christ: but it is not so agreeable to such a one, as to be appropriate to him, or to exclude the generality of serious and living Christians; because it is upon one account, principally common to ministers and to other Christians, that this judgment is to be made, and this desire is to have place in reference to that judgment. And therefore, that is what I will, for the little time that remains, chiefly insist upon:—That it ought to be, and in very great measure is, the temper and character of gracious persons, or sincere Christians, but principally of the faithful ministers of Christ, with reference to any interest or concern of theirs, to desire to leave this world, and to be with Christ.—And in speaking to this, I shall briefly, I. Explain what requires to be explained in it; and then, II. Show you upon what grounds this temper and disposition of mind is agreeable, in the general, to sincere Christians:—III. Upon what more peculiar grounds it is more especially suitable to the faithful ministers of Christ: and so make use of the whole.

I. As to what requires explication. Here we must show you what the object of this desire is in the first place; and then, secondly, show you what this desire, with the judgment unto which it is conformable, imports and carries in it. Then we shall proceed to consider the grounds, both with reference to Christians in general, and the faithful ministers of Christ in special, of their having this as an habitual temper of spirit belonging to them.

1. We are to consider the object, which this disposition of spirit, here described, has reference to. And that is two-fold, privative, and positive. There is,

(1.) The privative object, that this disposition has reference to; and that is, departing from hence. Their desire is to be gone, not to stay always here, *i. e.* as to any concern of their own. Indeed upon other accounts, abstracted from their own and more important, there may be considerations that may induce their willingness to stay; but as to their own concerns, the privative object of their desire, is, to be dissolved, or to be gone, εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι, they would fain be dissolved; take that reading, and this is such a one's sense, I would fain have my bonds and shackles taken off, I would be loose, not be always confined to a body of sin and death, and to a vain and wicked world; for these are the things to which we are united: or take the other reading, that are to be left, in this departure. To depart, what are we to depart from? Why, the *gravamina;* the most grievous things are, a body of sin and death, and a vain and sinful world. When God sees good, I would depart says, such a one, from these irksome grievous things, that, while they detain me, torment me every hour. And then,

(2.) There is the positive object, that this disposition has reference to; and that is, to be with Christ. This is a mighty thought, if we had time to stay upon it. It is generally to be considered here, with reference to what state of our Lord Christ, this was spoken, and then what it is to be with him in that state.

First, With reference to what state of our Lord Jesus this was spoken, I desire to be with Christ. Christ was not at this time in his state of humiliation; he was not now in the form of a servant; he was not now going to die, and sacrifice himself upon an ignominious cross, as it was mentioned he had done, in the next chapter, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was obedient to death. It is not in reference to this state, but what follows, that this is spoken; Wherefore God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that at his name, or in his name, every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth

It is that state of glory, in which he was enthroned, and was receiving the homage of all ranks of creatures, according to their capacities. It is this state, that is here referred to.

And then, What it is to be with him in this state, that we are to consider; and plain it is, it is not to be with him as spectators only, but in some sort as partakers; not barely as spectators. Indeed, to be so, is a most desirable thing, to all the lovers of Christ; to behold him upon the throne, invested with glory, the highest glory. But this is not all. Indeed, participation with him is sometimes expressed by beholding, as in John xvii. 24. Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory that thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world was laid. But that beholding, is fruitive vision; the vision, not of mere spectation, but fruition, by which we enjoy what we see. And so we are taught to reckon concerning this being with Christ in the state of glory. If we be dead with him, we believe we shall also live with him, by participation of the same glorious, blissful life, Rom. vi. 8. and chap. viii. ver. 17. If we are children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; that if we suffer with him, we might be also glorified together. Glorified, is to be made glorious, to be participants of the same glory with him, and not spectators merely. We are not to be glorified merely by a glory that we are to behold, but which we are to bear; not which we are to be the witnesses of only, but the subjects, whereby we are to be made glorious, in conformity to him, and in communion with him. And here, that we may more fully conceive the sense of this being with Christ, in the state of perfect felicity and glory, 'tis requisite that we consider these two things,—[1.] The highest perfection of the object; and,—[2.] A suitable perfection of the subject, according to its capacity, by which it can converse with, and enjoy, what continually rays, and is communicated, from so glorious and blessed an object.

[1.] The object in highest perfection; when our Lord Jesus Christ, not considered merely as God, but as God-man, is exalted, and made as glorious as glory could any way make him, when he is exalted, by way of remuneration for what he had done, for what he had suffered, for what he had achieved and accomplished by his doing and suffering, and he is now in all that most perfect dignity and glory that belongs to him on that account; this consideration we are to have of the glorious object. We are to consider the high and most absolute perfection of that person, the most wonderful one that ever was, and of which neither created nature, nor uncreated, affords the like; that is, such a person, in which all the excellencies of created and uncreated nature did meet, or were united; and all that felicity, and glory, and blessedness, that this person, according to either nature, and both together, doth enjoy. Here is the object wherewith we are to communicate.

[2.] And then to be with him, as participants, implies the connoted and consequential perfection of the subject in itself, the highest that it is capable of, the perfection of all the powers and faculties belonging to a creature of such a nature. A mind apt to employ itself about things of highest value and excellency, able to comprehend whatsoever is needful and fit to be known of such things; contented not to know what is unfit. A will refined from all terrene tinctures and propensions, enlarged and attempered to the best and highest good. Whence must proceed the liveliest and purest desires, the noblest and most grateful perceptions and delights, the pleasantest and most satisfying relishes and fruitions.

For (the high perfection of the object being supposed) the subject is the spirit of a just man made perfect, (Heb. xii. 23.) of one arrived, out of an imperfect to a perfect state. No supposable allusion in this text needs to exclude the real subjective perfection, which is so proper to such spirits and to such a state as is then finally referred to. The satisfaction itself, which results, cannot but be proportionable; according to the perfect excellency of the object, and the perfected capacity of the subject, a most entire satisfaction. These two, meeting together, the most glorious object, and a glorified spirit made capable of conversing with it, and enjoying it to the full. This makes that fulness of joy, those pleasures for evermore, that are at God's right hand or in his power, to dispose of, in eternal communication, Psal. xvi. ult. Thus you have some account of the object, privative and positive, what is to be left, and whom we are to come to; a sinful, mortal body to be left with a vain and wicked world; and a glorious Lord to be approached, so as to be with him, in actual, and complacential, and eternal communion; to be with him, not as spectators only, but partakers of that glory wherein he is. Then,

II. We are to consider the temper and disposition itself, of serious Christians, and of the faithful ministers of Christ especially, in reference to this state of the objects. And it is made up of two things,—1. Desire; and—2. Estimation, or judgment; that is the measure of the former, and according whereto that desire is directed.

1. This desire is ἐπιθυμία, intense desire, earnest desire, the fervour of desire. That is, as to myself, and as to any concern of mine, I do most earnestly desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; ἐπιθυμία signifies not less than that. And then,

2. The judgment that is made of the case, unto which this desire is conformable. That is, that to be with Christ is far better, far better! It is a strange emphasis, that is used in the Greek text, to express this; for there are two comparatives, μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον; more better, with a mighty surplusage besides in the word conjoined, πολλῷ. I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; which is better, better by much; or incomparably better; better above and beyond all comparison. One comparative would not serve the turn, but he adds another, and then superadds a vast surplusage over and above. This is the judgment of the case, according to which this desire is directed and measured. And now for the reasons of this temper and posture of soul, in reference to this state of the case. There are divers very obvious.

(1.) That this is most agreeable to the law of our creation, to desire and covet the most perfect state, whereof we are capable. It is an unnatural thing not to do so, not to covet the perfection of that state, that we can finally attain to. Nature, in all creatures, tends to perfection; it is a monstrous disorder in nature, for any creature, if it be capable of choice, to choose a state beneath the highest perfection whereof it is capable. And,

(2.) It is most suitable to the design of our redemption, whether we consider the private object, unto which our redemption refers, or the positive. The privative object, this world, that we are to forsake and leave, with this flesh, that con-naturalizes us to this world. Christ gave himself for us, to deliver us from this present evil world, Gal. i. 4. As for his redeemed ones, those for whom he gave himself, he is willing they should be here awhile; but he gave himself for them, that they might not be here always; that he might fetch them out of this horrid abyss of darkness, impurity, and death.

And if you look to the positive object, our Lord died to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. He suffered once, the just for the unjust, for this purpose. He will never desist, till he have brought us quite home to God. And it became him, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect by sufferings, Heb. ii. 10. He suffered, and those sufferings he underwent were the price of our redemption; and for this, to bring the many sons to glory, that were to be brought. And it becomes him, that made all things by himself, and for himself, to bring about his great and glorious design this way; to make the Captain of our salvation perfect, that is, perfectly master of his design. And Rev. v. 9. we are told, that the Lamb that was slain, was slain on purpose, that he might redeem us to God by his blood; that he might be capable of saying at last, I have shed my blood, and it has not been in vain; here I have brought back thy wandering strays to thee, that were separate, that had gone off. He has redeemed them to God by his blood: they were gone off from God; and he, in this way, fetches them back to God; never reckoning his work finished, till he can say, Here am I, and the children thou hast given me.

(3.) This most fully answers the Gospel call, under which we continually are, as to both the parts of the object, the privative and positive. By the Gospel we are

called out of the world. This is carried in the very notion of the church, it consists of a people called out of the world. And that call is not finished till we are quite out; but we must be out in the inclination of our minds; to be gone from this world, that we may be with the Lord. And as to the positive part of the Gospel call, the final term of it is the eternal glory. The God of all grace has called us to his own eternal glory by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. v. 10.

4. This is most suitable unto the aim and tendency of the new creature, which is indeed the effect of the Gospel call; wheresoever it comes to be effectual calling, the new creature is the product. This is the genius of the new creature, to aspire upwards. They that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit groan within themselves; groan as under a pressure, or burden; to be loosened from this world, from this earth, and from these bodies; and to partake in the glory of the sons of God, manifested in the proper season of their manifestation, Rom. viii. 19. compared with the 23rd. And as they, that in the work of the new creation are what they are, new creatures as being born from heaven; so they are born for it. Except a man be born ἄνωθεν, from above, he cannot enter into nor see the kingdom of God, John iii. 3, 5. He is born for this heavenly state, when he is regenerate, when he is made a new creature, that he may be capable of entering into this kingdom. And, 1 Pet. i. 3. Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten us again to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. There are principles inlaid in the work of the new creature, which dispose the soul God-ward, and heaven-ward. Hereby they are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, as that in Col. i. 12. And to suppose that there should be a new creature without such a disposition as this, is to suppose the new creature to be the most unnatural creature under heaven. It must have dispositions in it suitable to its nature, and to that state that it is designed ultimately for; as every other creature is suited to the place and state it is to hold in the creation of God.

But then as to what is more peculiar to ministers, they have more reason than others for this temper and disposition of spirit, both as they know more, generally, of the difficulties of the world, and should be supposed to know more of the state of the other world, than the generality of other men do. Their toil, and labour, and travail, while they are here in this world, is like to be more: read at leisure 1 Cor. iv. 9—13. with 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5. They have many more uncomfortable things to exercise them; especially the small success of their labours, that they often do but sow the wind, and sometimes reap the whirlwind, and may be glad to depart on this account. And it is to be supposed too, that they should know more of the other world; for they are more obliged to be daily conversant there; their constant business has a steady direct tendency thitherward: and therefore as this cannot but be the temper of serious Christians, it is to be much more so of the faithful ministers of Christ.

And therefore to draw to a conclusion, and shut up all with some use, we may,

1. Infer from it, the greatness of that capacity which belongs to an intelligent immortal spirit, that it is capable of such a state, as being glorified with the Lord Jesus Christ in that high exaltation of his; 'tis a state, whereof the human spirit is capable. It is indeed very unapt, very indisposed, till the regenerating work take place, till the Divine Spirit have moulded it to that state; but then, in the mean time, there is a capacity, a ground-work, upon which the Divine Spirit does operate, by enlightening the mind, and enlarging the will, and refining and defecating the affections, and implanting celestial principles, that do all dispose it heaven-ward. But in the mean time, it is a useful reflection for every intelligent spirit, that inhabits mortal flesh, to consider, what do I here? While it is my lot to be yet inhabiting this flesh, am I only to mind the things of the flesh? I am capable of an abode above, with the blessed glorious Lord of all; with him my greater concernments do now lie, Col. iii. 1, 2. And,

2. It further lets us see the wonderful love of God in Christ, that he should design such mean abject creatures as we to such a state; that is, that when we depart, and leave this world, we are to be with Christ. O kind design! What admirable love is this, that he will not have his own to be always at a distance and far from him! When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory, in that of Col. iii. 4. And again, further,

3. We may infer hence, that holiness, wherever it comes to have place, does comprehend and include in it divine wisdom, so as to make persons capable of judging right, or making a true estimate of things, which are more valuable, and which are less. Till the sanctifying work of God's Spirit take place in the minds and hearts of men, they judge like fools; they say a portion here on earth is better, let us dwell always amidst the darkness and death of this lower world, and let them be with Christ that will. But says a gracious spirit, to be with Christ is far better, incomparably, beyond all comparison better, and therefore let us depart, and be with him, as to any interest and concern of ours. And this being so, it is of the greatest consequence to us imaginable, for all of us to endeavour to get this temper of spirit made habitual to ourselves; for it is a thing of dreadful importance, to find the temper of my mind and soul differ from that of all good Christians that ever were, or ever shall be. It is one thing indeed, to be willing to have the height of our happiness deferred for common good; but it is quite another thing, to desire to stay here, because I love this world better, and when the practical judgment of our souls is, I had rather be here; when not any concern for the interest of Christ, or design of doing him service here, does reconcile me to an earthly state; but my own temper and spirit is such, that I cannot endure the thoughts of a remove. And let me insist here a little. When the best are continually going; and though the worst do not go the same way, they are going hence too, departing from hence; not to be willing to follow! To have a desire running counter to the stream and course of nature, in all, and the current of grace in the best, is very unaccountable; and wherein we should by no means tolerate ourselves. An irrational desire of what we see to be impossible; a desire that fights against necessity, which will be too hard for us, and will overcome at last, as to the term from which, an abode here; and an unholy desire, in respect of the term to which, *viz.* not to be with Christ; such a desire we should no more endure in ourselves, than fire in our bosoms. To have such an excellent person gone from amongst us, as is lately gone; but to have no disposition to follow! You loved him well, and you loved to hear him preach of heaven, but you cannot endure the thoughts of going where he is gone! Is this well? The world is dying, and you would live! *Miser est quicumque non vult mundo secum moriente mori*, Sen. Trag. What a wretched miscreant is he, that would be an exception from all mankind! and cannot be content to die, when the whole world is dying with him! And for Christians united with Christ, they are such in whose hearts there is a rooted propension towards him, so as to covet his presence above all things, Rev. xxii. The Spirit and the bride say, Come, come, Lord Jesus; either come and take us to thee, or come and manifest thyself to us. Consider then, how absolutely necessary it is, if there be this terrene temper of spirit, to get it changed. For,

(1.) While it remains, it countermines the sum of religion. All Christianity runs counter, in the whole design of it, to this temper of spirit, for it terminates on the other world. But when all our thoughts and designs terminate on this world, what a dismal thing is it! to have a temper and disposition in me, wholly repugnant to the design of the Christian religion, which is but to draw people off from this world, and to fit them for another.

(2.) It will infer, in the next place, that whenever any die, they must die just after the same manner that wicked men do, a violent death; be torn away from their earthly station. He shall pluck him out of his dwelling-place, and root him out of the land of the living, as the Psalmist speaks, Psalm lii. 5. This is dying a violent death; our hearts do not consent, we cannot go but as we are torn up by the roots, and plucked out of our dwelling-places. This is quite another thing from that, Now lettest thou thy ser-

vant depart in peace; and this desiring to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. And it signifies,

(3.) Our not yet having taken God for our God; for our taking him to be our God, and to be our best good, is the same thing. If God be not our best good, he is not our God: and can we choose to be willing to be at an eternal distance from our best good? It must signify, that the love of God has no place in us, sincere love, true love to Christ, for it is never true, if it be not supreme. But it is the greatest absurdity imaginable, that I should supremely love one, that I desire never to be with, or enjoy. I shall only add, with reference to the sad occasion that lies in view before us, that what instances we meet with of this kind, should leave their several correspondent effects and impressions upon our spirits, partly of lamentation, and partly of imitation, and partly of peaceful submission and satisfaction in the issue, however grievous it be to us.

1. Of Lamentation. It is a much to be lamented thing, when such go, as that reverend and worthy person that is lately gone from amongst you. For this temper of spirit being supposed, by how much the more there was of the conjunct disposition to have been content to have staid longer for public good; this speaks so much the more of an excellent spirit: when desires are so fervent after the purity and perfection of the heavenly state, that nothing but sincere devotedness to the interest of God in Christ, could make them patient of longer abode on earth. 'Tis a respect to God that either draws, or detains them, nothing but what is divine inclines them either way: either the enjoyment of God above or his further service here below. That is an excellent spirit that lies under such influences. And the higher was the excellency of such a man, the greater is the loss of him. The more he desired heaven, within such limits, the greater was his value, and with so much the brighter lustre he shone on earth. There is much of God conspicuous in such a man. And it was not a little of him that was observable in this worthy person. Such a course as his was, that even course, that peaceful course, wherein was so eminent devotedness to God, and benignity towards man, showed his spirit was touched by the one, for the other. It could not be, but by influence from heaven, that he so steadily tended thitherward himself, and was only willing to stay so long out of it, that he might invite and draw on as many as he could with him thither. Hereby he appeared so much the more attempered to the heavenly state, and that world where divine love governs, making a man by how much the more strongly he was attracted himself by it, so much the more desirous to attract others. It is what such a one has about him of God on earth, that makes him a desirable thing to us here; it is not what men have of the earthly spirit, but what they have of the Divine Spirit, that makes them useful, both by their labours and examples, to this world of ours; as was this eminent servant of Christ. It is a great thing, to have one pass so long continued course as his was, with so equal a temper. It is like I may have known him longer than many or most of you that were not related.

About fifty years I remember his course, and our conversation was not casual or at a distance, as that of mere colleagues, chosen by others, but as friends inward, and chosen by ourselves. Many a day we have prayed together; conferred and taken sweet counsel together; when he was at once an example and ornament to his college, where he lived respected and beloved of all, but of them most, who most knew him: that constant serenity, and equality of mind, that seriousness, that humility, wherein he excelled, rendered him amiable to observers; and therewith that industry and diligence that he used in his younger days, by which he laid up that great stock of learning and useful knowledge, that made him (when Providence called him to the city) a well-instructed scribe, capable and apt to bring out of his treasury things new and old, whereof there is and will be a long extant proof in his judicious and dilucid expositions of the epistles to the Philippians and the Colossians, which was the part he bore in the supplement to that most useful work, the English Annotations on the Bible, by the Reverend Mr. Matthew Pool. In the great city he shone a bright and burning light, till many such lights were in one day put under a bushel. I need not tell you what, or how black, that day was. And then, though he was constrained to desert his station, he did not desert his Master's work; but still he was with God, and God was with him; and you know it, I doubt not, many of you, what it was to live under so truly evangelical a minister; to have doctrine from time to time distilling as the dew, and dropping upon you, such, as from which you might perceive how great was his acquaintance with the mysteries of Christ: in reference to those, over whom he had opportunity to watch, it was undoubtedly, if it were not their great fault, their very great advantage.

As to his domestic relations, knowing so much of him, I cannot but so much the more lament their loss: God will, I doubt not, be the bereaved widow's portion; but it ought with tenderness to be considered, what it was for one person to lose successively two such helps, as this and her former husband were, (who was also in another university, my former and most inward friend, that worthy man Mr. Thomas Wadsworth,) both eminent instruments in the church of Christ. And this has been more eminently remarkable concerning him that is lately gone, that the relations of the family, to whom he was not naturally related, the branches from another root, yet had that apprehension of his love and care of them, and of their own loss, as to desire this public testimony might from them remain of him, that he was to them as tender a father, as if he had been a natural one: such fathers-in-law are seldom known, and therefore it ought to be mentioned, as that which may signify somewhat towards the embalming of his memory among you. Graces, when diffused, give their pleasant relishes to all that any way partake of them.

What follows was delivered in writing into my hands to be inserted, by a dear relation of his.—His humility and self-denial were eminently conspicuous in his taking upon him the care and charge of so small and poor a people, and continuing with them to the damage of his own estate, though he had considerable offers elsewhere. His meekness, as it was very visible in all his conversation, it was singularly showed in his bearing and passing by slights and affronts, even from those he had very much obliged, taking off the resentments that his friends had of the injuries of that kind put upon him, by abasing himself, saying, I am an unworthy creature, I deserve no better. His candour every one was certainly made sensible of, who should offer to speak any thing reflectingly about any person behind their backs, for he was sure to vindicate or lenify in this case, as far as he could.

When labours, weakness, and age had worked out his strength of body, there was never any thing appeared so manifestly to trouble him, as being necessitated to desist from constant preaching.—And notwithstanding all temporal discouragements he met with in the course of his ministry, his mind, to the very last, was to have both his sons brought up to it. During the short time of his last illness, when his head appeared somewhat disordered in other things, by the pains that were upon him, it was observable, that he always showed himself sensible in hearing or discoursing about any thing religious; being among other things discoursed with by his brother about the discharge of his ministry, he answered, he hoped he had endeavoured to serve God faithfully, and sincerely, though he had been an unprofitable servant. About five hours before his death, he said, God is my portion; and desired those about him to join with him in prayer, wherein he expressed himself very suitably to his case as a dying man, concluding thus: "Grant that when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, I may be taken to those mansions not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

As his life was calm and serene, so was his dying, for though throughout his sickness he was all along apprehensive of approaching death, there was no ruffle upon his spirit, of which he himself then gave this account, "I know in whom I have believed."

2. Of Imitation. And as such strokes, when they come, ought to be lamented, they that by such strokes are taken away, ought to be imitated. The example remains; you have the idea left; you know how such a one lived, how he walked, how he conversed with his family, how he conversed with you as he had occasion: that excellent spirit he discovered in all, how much of an imitable example has

it given to all those that are capable of imitating and receiving instruction that way?

3. Of Satisfaction. But it ought also to have the effect of satisfaction in the divine pleasure. When such a blow as this comes, do not repine, peacefully submit, though it carry smartness and severity with it. You ought to feel it, but yet notwithstanding to receive it with submissive silence, to be dumb, and not open your mouths, remembering who hath done it, and that it is the disposal of wisdom that cannot err, as well as of power that cannot be resisted, and of kindness and goodness that has its gratefulness to this departed servant of his. For consider, that notwithstanding his willingness to have stayed longer, if his Lord, whose he was, and whom he served, had thought fit; yet this could not but be his habitual sense, to desire to depart, and to be with him, which was far better. And if Christ be pleased, and he be pleased, why should we be displeased?

This was the will of Christ, declared by his word, as to the thing, John xvii. 24. Father, I will, that those that thou hast given me, be with me where I am, to behold my glory. And declared by the event as to the time. And his will, both because it was Christ's, and because it was best. Who are we that we should oppose our will to so kind a will on Christ's part, and so well-pleased a will on his part? or that a dissatisfaction should remain with us, as to what there is with Christ, and him, so entire satisfaction?

A FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR THAT EXCELLENT MINISTER OF CHRIST, THE TRULY

REV. WILLIAM BATES, D. D.

WHO DECEASED JULY 14TH, 1699.

TO THE

RIGHT NOBLE WILLIAM, DUKE AND EARL OF BEDFORD; MARQUIS OF TAVISTOCK, LORD RUSSEL, BARON RUSSEL OF THORNHAUGH,

LORD LIEUTENANT OF THE COUNTIES OF MIDDLESEX, BEDFORD, AND CAMBRIDGE; KNIGHT OF THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER, AND ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST HONOURABLE PRIVY COUNCIL.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,

THE peculiar and just respect which your grace has long had for the worthy person, whose much lamented decease occasioned the following discourse, easily induced me to believe, it would not offend your Grace, that your illustrious name is prefixed to it. As it also was the sense of his mournful relict, that it could be no less than your Grace's right, such a memorial should be extant, of the favourable aspects wherewith you have been pleased to honour this her so dear relative. Nor can it be suitable to the noble amplitude of your truly great mind, that it should be told the world you knew how to value true worth, wheresoever you found it. Not confining your respects to any party; or distinguishing men by any, when especially the parties themselves are distinguished by marks, which they who wear them count indifferent, and which, therefore, must be understood to make men neither better nor worse. And if they who wear them not, count otherwise, though they should be mistaken in their judgment, after their having endeavoured to the uttermost, to be rightly informed; their sincerity, accompanied, and evidenced, by great self-denial, must in the account of so equal and candid a judge, as your Grace, far outweigh so light a mistake, in so small matters. Such differences will be easily tolerable, where there is that mutual charity, as neither to think a different judgment to be bribed with dignities, and emoluments, on the one hand; nor to be perverted by humour, and affectation of singularity, on the other.

The reverend Doctor's great candour, and moderation, in reference to the things wherein he hath been constrained to differ from many excellent persons; and his remoteness from any disposition to censure them from whom he differed, have been these many years conspicuous to all that knew him. The apprehension having been deeply inwrought into the temper of his mind, that the things wherein only it could be possible for truly good men to differ, must be but trifles, in comparison of the much greater things, wherein it was impossible for them not to agree. And I no way doubt, but the things for which your Grace most deservedly valued this excellent person, were such as have in them an inherent and immutable goodness; not varying with times, or the changeable posture of secular affairs; but which must be the same in all times. Nor appropriate to persons of this or that denomination, but that may be common to persons sincerely good, of any denomination whatsoever. Whereupon the testimony your Grace hath from time to time given of your value of him, on such an account, must have redounded to yourself; have reflected true honour on your own name; shown your discerning judgment of persons and things; and entitled you to his prayers; which, I hope, have been available to the drawing down of blessings on yourself and your noble family.

Unto whose must his prayers also be added, for the same purposes; who is with greatest sincerity, and under many obligations

Your Grace's most obedient,
and most humble servant,
JOHN HOWE.

It is grievous to me to tell you, in whose room and stead I do now stand in this place this day. Nor do I need; you can tell yourselves, observing the stated courses and alternations held in this lecture, that if the counsels of heaven had agreed with our desires and hopes on earth, this is the day, this is the hour, wherein you had again seen the face, and heard the voice, of that excellent servant of Christ, whom we now lament as lost to us, and dead out of our world. Not absolutely dead; for God who is his God for ever and ever, is not the God of the dead but of the living. Dying out of this world, he was born into the other. But in that sense wherein he is dead to us, and this world of ours, what remains but that we agree to say, Let us die with him? And these are the words, which if God will graciously afford us his help and presence, we may fruitfully entertain ourselves with, upon this sad occasion at this time: you will find them in—

John xi. 16.

Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

The history to which these words belong, contains so illustrious and instructive an instance of the Redeemer's power over both worlds, and so plainly shows, that he could at his pleasure, translate men out of the one into the other, as might best serve the proper purposes of his redemption, that it can never be unseasonable to us to consider it, who are always subject to the same power. And it is very especially seasonable at this time, when we have reason enough to re-consider his late use of this power, in another kind, less grateful to us, but not less wise or just in itself; not the recalling of one out of the other world into this, but the calling away of one out of this world into the other; the translating of this excellent person from among us, whose longer abode here had been highly desirable, as his removal is most bitterly grievous, and must have been intolerable, were it not that though this is not the same act, it is an act of that same power over lives, which in all its exertions we are always to behold with the same profound adoring silence, and a disposition of mind to receive instruction from it, whether it be pleasing to us, or displeasing. I will make no apology for my recalling your thoughts, so long after, to this sad theme. Our mutual endeardness, his condescending affection to me, and my reverential affection to him, were so generally known to those that knew either of us, that it might be expected I should take some public notice of this severing stroke; and I may suppose my circumstances to be so known, that it is obvious to every one to understand I could do it no sooner.

It will not be unuseful to make some brief reflection upon this miraculous work of our Lord, and thence return to the special subject, which I desire your thoughts may be fixed upon, as mine have been. It was the most memorable of all our Lord's works of this kind, yet not mentioned by the other evangelists; lest, as is supposed, it should revive the Jewish malice against Lazarus; who, as Epiphanius tells us, was reported to have lived thirty years after, within which time the others had all written, whereas this evangelist wrote not, till after his final decease. It was wrought for the same great end, for which all his wonderful works were done and written, generally, for the glory of God, as is intimated, ver. 4, and particularly, as this evangelist tells us, chap. xx. 20, 21. That we might believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name. And though they all had this design: this towards the end of his course, seems meant for the last and conclusive stroke, having a brighter and more conspicuous appearance of the Divine glory in it, for a fuller and more convictive demonstration, that he was the Son of God, and the Messiah, as he gave himself out to be. And all things were designed in the aptest subserviency hereto; that once for all, this long disputed point might be put out of all doubt.

For this end it is ordered, that Lazarus should at this time fall sick. Nothing more appeared to human prospect, but that the disease befell him according to the common course of natural causes: but says our Lord, his sickness is not unto death; *viz.* as the final and permanent event or design of it; but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby, ver. 4. God's counsels lie deep, not obvious to common view. When such a servant of God is fallen sick, we know not what he intends to bring out of it. His glory may, in his own way and time, so much the more brightly shine forth, though we yet distinctly know not when or how. Upon this account, when our Lord not only heard of Lazarus's sickness, but knew he was dead, he yet defers two days, even though he knew him to have been at least two days dead before: so that when he now comes to the place, he finds him to have lain four days in the grave, ver. 17. He resolves to give so much the greater scope, and advantage, to the glory of the Divine power, to display and evidence itself. He defers, till now death and the grave were in full dominion, that his conquest might be the more glorious. He had before raised some from death, none from the grave. The lamenting relatives were now in despair: the thoughts of restitution were quite laid aside. All their hopes were buried with the deceased in the same grave, as may be collected from sundry following verses.

In the like despair, not long after, were the mournful disciples, concerning their not only deceased but entombed Lord, unto whose surprising resurrection, this seems a designed prelude. The bereaved relations, and their comforters, were all abandoned to sorrow, and drenched in tears. And with the rest we are told, ver. 35, that Jesus wept. But why was this? Was it that he knew not his own mind, or distrusted his own power? He had given sufficient intimation of his own purpose, and of the foresight he had of the certain, glorious issue of this gloomy dark providence. 'Tis evident therefore for what he wept not. 'Tis not so obvious to conclude for what he wept. It is most unworthy of him to suppose his was feigned sorrow, or that he shed hypocritical tears. Nor was this the only instance of his weeping: no, no, he was a man of sorrow, acquainted with griefs; and had always in view sufficient cause of real soul-trouble, as this is called, ver. 33. He groaned in spirit and was troubled. It must be, by the contexture of the evangelical history, near the time of his weeping over Jerusalem, when his soul was filled and taken up with sad and mournful themes.

But who can tell what thoughts lay deep in that large and comprehensive mind? We are sure, though he wept with the rest, that 'twas not as they wept, nor from the same motives. His thoughts were not as their thoughts, but as far wider, and higher, as the heavens are than the earth. We have no way to know what his thoughts were; we know what they might be. He saw not Jerusalem only, but all this world, buried in sin and death. He could not, as the second Adam, be the resurrection and the life, as he speaks, ver. 25, without beholding with a compassionate heart, the impurities and miseries, wherewith it was deluged by the first. And he had now enough in view to discompose his pure mind, intent upon high and great things; that when his business into this world was to prepare men for another; and when they were fit, to translate them thither; even they that professed to believe on him, should no more understand him; that his kind and great design should be no more grateful to them, and so slowly enter into their minds and hearts, that when they saw one such translation, it should so much displease them, and they so little relish it, as to be all in tears and lamentations thereupon; and thereby discover such an affixedness of heart and spirit to this present world, and state of things, as to prefer the enjoyment of a friend on earth, before all the glories of the heavenly state; so might their immoderate weeping some way cause his tears. But when he expressed his trouble by groans and tears, he suppressed the causes of it, and goes on to his present intended work. In order hereto, ver. 39, he commands the gravestone to be removed; neglecting the objection, ver. 39. "By this time he stinks."

He observed with a compassionate indulgence, the diffidence which he meant speedily to refute. Nor, because we also are too prone to prescribe limits to the Divine

power, ought we for his indulgence to be the less severe to ourselves. Forgetting the transcendency of that power, we think this or that strange, and scarce possible to be done, because we too highly consider the equal or greater strangeness of what we see is done. We count things easy, that are by use become familiar to our senses, and apprehend we have the notion of them clear, and how they can come to be as they are; not having e amined or inquired whether our apprehensions were right and congruous, or not. Things that have not struck our sense, making ourselves and even our sense the measure, we count impossible and unconceivable.

By the course of nature our sense hath told us, a body so long in the grave must be putrid and stink. But who settled that course of nature? If we ascend not to the original cause, the fixation of that course is as admirable and unaccountable; if we do, a departure from it is as easy. What can the wisest philosophers conceive of the difference between an offensive smell and a grateful, but the different disposition or texture of the particles of matter, in relation to the *sensorium*, or the receptive organ? When what the different disposition is, remains altogether unapprehensible, and what no man can tell. We go away well satisfied concerning what we see happens every day, because we never inquire how things came to be as they are; when what we have not known to come to pass, though not more difficult, we say can never be. Otherwise we should think it no more admirable, or difficult to reduce in a moment the parts of matter to such a *situs*, as that they should give no offence to the sense of smelling, though before they did, than it was to the same power so to dispose, that in one sort of location, they should give that offence, in another they should not, and, perhaps, in a third, highly gratify and please. Thousands of like instances might be given, but this comes now in our way.

The world is full of miracles; we are compassed about with such, and are such. There is 'tis true a peculiar notion of them, as necessary as they are themselves; signifying not what is done by a greater power, but less usual. As such, the use and need of them only argues the infirmity of our minds, sunk into earth and sense, and grown somnolent; whence they need to be roused by surprising and uncommon things, and brought to consider, that he only, who could fix and settle the so steady course of nature, could alter it, and make it forsake its wonted tract: which he must always be supposed to do, for some very weighty, important end and reason. So absolute power being ever in strict connexion with the most perfect wisdom, and therefore claiming to be the more earnestly attended to, and considered the more deeply. To that power that could create a man, 'twas equally easy to perfume a grave, or to make a new man spring up out of it, in fresh strength, comeliness, and vigour. To recompose the disordered parts of a body turning to dust, and refit it for the union and use of the returning soul; this he will not do often, but he saw a just and valuable reason for his doing it at this time.

He was now to give and leave behind him a full conclusive demonstration, once for all, of his being the Son of God, by whom the worlds were made; and the Christ, or Messiah, (the great controverted point of that time,) which, *v.* 5. is called glorifying the Son; who for asserting this, was calumniated as an impostor and deceiver of the people. He was to give a specimen of his power, as such, over universal nature, and that he could at pleasure control and countermand the most established laws of it. All things being put under that notion, as he was the Christ, into his hands, and all power given him both in heaven and earth, so as that by him all things must consist.[a] A power he was to use, being gradually, and at last perfectly, to make all things new.[b] He was to make good his own title, I am the resurrection and the life,[c] which he assumes in this context, to let it be seen he was no vain pretender; and that it was no vain faith that should be placed upon him in this respect, but that what he should now do, as to one, he was equally able to do, in the fit season, for every one, when all that are in their graves should hear his voice.[d] He was to show forth a resemblance of that more peculiar act of his most graciously undertaken office, to be a spring of life to souls morally dead, *viz.* in trespasses and sins.[e] To give this divine and most noble kind of life! To do that most merciful and most God-like work! He was to take away all cause or pretence for despair, but that, whereas a death was to pass upon himself, and upon his church on earth, both he himself, and it, with his dead body, should arise.[f] Therefore he utters that mighty commanding voice, at which rocks and mountains tremble and shiver, and which all the powers of nature must obey; "Lazarus, come forth!" and he comes forth. These things we now lightly touched, hoping they may be of further use to us afterwards.[g] We expect not the like thing in our present mournful case; but we expect greater things; for which we are to await our Lord's season.

In the mean time let us return and consider what is overtured in the case the text refers to, when, as to any such remedy, the mourning friends expected as little as we. Here was a worthy good man gone; a friend of Christ, and of his friends. Christianity gives no man a terrestrial immortality; Christians, even the best of them, must die as well as other men. This was a matter taken to heart by Christ himself, as we have seen, in a way becoming and worthy of him. His disciples also are deeply concerned, and they consider and discourse it their way. One of them, Thomas, who also was called Didymus, (wherein is no other mystery, than that his name is first given us in Hebrew, then in Greek, as is not unexampled elsewhere,) proposes, as you have heard; "Let us also go that we may die with him." Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. There was, no doubt, an abounding fulness of sense in this good man's soul, from whence these words did proceed. And it might be two-fold; either—I. Good and commendable, fit for our imitation, and whereto the temper of our spirits should be conformed.—Or, II. Faulty and reprehensible; such, as against which we should arm and fortify ourselves.—Such mixtures are not to be thought strange. It is little to be expected, that in what is hastily said by the best on earth, on an occasion apt to stir passions, there should be nothing but pure breathings of heavenly wisdom and goodness.

I. Under the former head, we shall speak of divers things, which we cannot, indeed, be sure were the explicit, distinct sense of this good man, at this time; but which might be and should be ours on a like occasion. Which well agree with Christian principles, and which his words serve aptly enough to express; as,

(1.) A firm belief of a future state. Did this good man only desire to partake with the other in death, and no more? Did his wish terminate here? Can we apprehend any thing good or desirable in mere death that one would covet to share in with another? or which one would be loath he should engross alone? Nor could Thomas mean this, having heard that Lazarus was already dead. It cannot be thought, that one who had been some years in immediate attendance upon the Son of God, the Lord from heaven, and under his instructions, and who had so much opportunity to observe, that his whole design lay for another world; and that he never encouraged his followers to expect from him any advantages above others, in this world, but forewarned them of troubles and sufferings, to which they would be always liable from it, and that they must be content to wait for their rewards in another state: it is not to be thought that such a one was an infidel in reference to any such state; or that he thought his friend extinct by dying; or that when he wished to be with him, he wished to be no where, or nothing.

(2.) A mind loose and disengaged from this present world. He could be intent upon no great designs for this earth, who with the next that leaves it, was willing to go too.

(3.) Easy, placid thoughts of dying. He looked upon death as no such frightful thing, that could so familiarly, and off-hand, say, when he thought of such a one's dying; Come, let's go and die with him.

a John xii. 3. Matt. xxviii. 18. Col. i. 17. b Rev. xxi. 5.
c Ver. 25. d Chap. v. 28 e Eph. ii. f Isa. xxvi. 19.
g Where Lazarus's soul had been in the mean time, was too light a matter to weigh against these mighty things our Lord was intent upon. His concerns were to yield and bow to his Lord and Master's great designs: he could not be unfitter for his own business afterwards, than the apostle in the like case (for ought that he himself knew) was for his. The considerations of this matter did not divert our Lord Christ from what he was intent upon; nor let it divert us, but, as a lighter matter, be left for the exercise of lighter minds.

(4.) A distinguishing judgment concerning the states of men hereafter, remote from thinking it fares with all alike, in the other world; but well informed, that it could only be ill with ill men, and well only with the good. A settled persuasion of a judgment to come. According to the declared rules of which judgment, this present judgment is formed. That they who continue in a course of well-doing, shall have eternal life; evil-doers, indignation and wrath.[h]—This wish could not be thought less cautious than his, who says, with distinction, Let me die the death of the righteous.[i]—It must be far from him to be content, God should gather his soul with sinners.[k] The future state was, no doubt, considered as a state of separation between men and men. He could not covet to be associated with good and bad, promiscuously, and at random.

(5.) A rationally charitable opinion, and estimate, that he was sincerely good and happy, with whom he coveted to be united in death. Such an opinion is all that is here requisite. Faith it cannot be, for the object is not a revealed thing. Knowledge it is not, for we have no medium to know it by. That we have more reason to think this, than the contrary, of such a one, is sufficient, and that this should be implied in this wish, is necessary. Here was an apprehension of a happy state the other was passed into. That saying, *Sit anima mea cum philosophis*, implied that he who said it, thought their state better than some other men's. And Thomas could not but have sufficient reason for his apprehension of Lazarus's sincerity so as not to doubt of his felicity. His house, he observed, was our Lord's resort: here he was received gladly by him and his good sisters. His doctrine, we have cause to think, he entertained as well as himself, and himself for his doctrine's sake. The peculiar affection our Lord had for him, observed by the domestics, that say, He whom thou lovest is sick, ver. 3. noted by the Jews, with a, Behold how he loved him, ver. 36. could leave Thomas no ground of doubt, but he was a sincere believer on the Son of God, and now in a blessed state: so are Christians, visibly such, to esteem of one another, and accordingly to have communion with one another in grace, and hope and wish for it in glory. A temper, now, very alien from too many that go under that name; who make not the great substantials of Christianity the measure of their present and hoped communion, but devised additions of their own: or rather, not what they add to, but substitute in the stead of, faith, mercy, and the love of God; and license themselves to ascend the throne, usurp the seat of judgment, and boldly damn all them who are not of their own complexion and party; and that cannot so far conform to their humours, passions, prejudices, and interested inclinations, as to say and act in every thing just as they do.

(6.) A most ardent and most generous love to such good men upon that just and reasonable apprehension of them. For, what love can be greater? How can one more highly express love to any man, than by a declared willingness to live and die with him; and simply to die, when he can no longer live with him? Love raised to this pitch is stronger than death. Heathen story is not without such instances of some, whom no dread of death could sever from each other; but that they have been willing, as the case should require, to die with, or to die for, another. To be either each other's companions or substitutes in death. The tyrant Dionysius having sentenced to death one of that admirable pair, Damon and Pythias, and fixed the day of execution, the condemned person petitioned for leave to be absent upon important occasions; in that interval his friend offering himself, as his sponsor, to die for him, if he returned not by the appointed day. He returning punctually with all diligence, knowing his friend's life to be otherwise in hazard; the tyrant, in great admiration of their mutual love and fidelity, pardons the condemned, and requests of them both, that they would admit him, as a third person, into the society of their friendship.[l]

What they tell us of divers others I mention not, whom no death could sever; whom dangers did more closely unite. Such as are conjoined in the same common cause, their mutual love mutually animates them even to face death; because each finds the other will not flinch, or leave him in danger alone. Many waxed bold by the apostle's bonds,[m] when they could not but be thought bonds of death; no doubt, because he was dear to them. So that they were willing even to run into the same bonds, because he was bound by them. Even in this sense love casts out fear. And what could more either express his own love, or tend to inflame other men's, than when that great apostle bespeaks the Christian's of that time, as having his life bound up in theirs? I live if ye stand fast[n]—that he was ready to impart with the Gospel, even his own soul to them, because they were dear to him.[o] And that they were in his heart to live and die with them.[p] There seemed to be but one life common to him and them. When there are such unions, that each is to the other an *alter ego, another self;* and another's soul is to a man as half his own,[q] as he pathetically phrases it; here is the height of affection! And that affection mutually heightens each other's courage, and is a continual and reciprocated source of a generous magnanimity springing from the one into the other's breast; while they perceive in one another a mutual vying, who shall the more adventurously rush upon death for, or in conjunction with, the other.

This seems not alien from the temper of Thomas's mind in his uttering of these words. For when our Lord proposed going into Judea, other of the disciples objecting that the Jews had there lately sought to kill him; he, when he understood Lazarus was dead, whom he knew to be a friend to that cause, though he died not for it; Come, says he, let us now fear no death, let us rush, in *media arma*, throw ourselves into the midst of death, and there breathe forth our souls, full of love to God, and Christ, and him, and one another; even upon the same spot where this friend of our Lord, and our common cause and interest, breathed forth his. These noble principles, fortitude and love, might have made two distinct heads of discourse; but they are so complicated and interwoven with one another, that they were scarce to be considered apart. And this complication these words more than intimate—That their hearts may be comforted, (or incited, and stirred up as the word there used signifies,) being knit together in love.[r]

(7.) A lively apprehension of the large, abounding diffusion of the Divine fulness: sufficiently able to replenish and satisfy all that shall be prepared to partake in it. That this good man's eye was upon somewhat else than mere death, and that he coveted not to die for dying sake, must be out of doubt with us. He certainly aimed at a blessed state after death. And who can suppose his mind void of that so common notion, that the blessedness of souls must lie in God? But this could not be all. The faint, spiritless notion, of a felicity to be enjoyed in God, could signify little to the present purpose. Here must be a lively, gustful apprehension of it too; for here is intervening death to be gone through. And he expresses himself willing to attempt this difficult pass. Let us go—that we may die—How few do you know, or converse with, that are without this notion, that God is the blessedness of souls! or that assent not to it as soon as they hear it! Yet how few do you know, that are willing to die to enjoy him! No, no; they are generally willing, rather to eat the dust of the earth, and feed upon ashes, thousands of years, than go to God for a better portion! Notwithstanding their dead, spiritless, inefficacious notion of a divine heavenly felicity, they had rather want it. A blessedness not to be had on earth, or that must come by dying! they bless themselves from such a blessedness! 'Tis plain then, there must be more than a dead notion to overcome their aversion to dying. And what can that be more? 'Tis as plain, it must be a vivid apprehension of such a blessedness in God after death. And that imports two things.

[1.] A divine faith of it. It must be the apprehension of faith, and of a divine faith. Almost every one pretends to believe it; but it is generally with a human faith only; because their parents, or preachers, or the common voice of the country, hath told them so. A divine faith is full of divine life and vigour; the substance and evidence of what is believed. The soul being overpowered into this

h Rom. ii. 7, 8. i Numb. xxiii. 10. k Psalm xxvi. 9.
l Related by Cicero, de Offic. lib. 3. and divers others.
m Phil. i. 14. n 1 Thess. iii. 8. o Chap. ii. 9.
p 2 Cor. vii. 3. q Hor. r Col. ii. 2.

belief by the majesty and authority of the great God revealing it, and the awfulness of his testimony; the word of God revealing this, as other portions of sacred truth, works effectually in them that so believe it; *i. e.* that receive it not as the word of man, but as the word of God.[s] They that live in the hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised,[t] would break through a thousand deaths to obtain it. This is more than a spiritless notion. And,

[2.] Such a lively apprehension hath in it somewhat of a present sense, and foretaste of that blessedness; a heaven begun, which is of the same kind with their future heaven. They have the kingdom of God in them, which stands in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.[u] Such an earnest speaks their own right, while they are yet sensible of the great imperfection of their present state. They are therefore willing to die, that they may be made perfect. They now know by taste what it is to enjoy God. O taste and see that God is good![w]—A mere notion informs us not enough, so as to actuate our minds what that means. Notwithstanding it, the carnal mind can frame no distinct heart-moving thought of felicity, other, or more grateful, than the relishes of meat and drink, or the satisfaction of some or other mean or carnalized appetite. They that have tasted somewhat of a higher kind, long for more, and most of all, that most perfect fruition which they must pass through death to attain.

We will not suppose this good man to have been destitute of such a faith, and of such tastes, of the heavenly felicity. And as hereby he was not without a lively apprehension of the kind and nature of it, so we must suppose him to have a like apprehension of the large, copious, abounding, and diffusive fulness of it, whereof his words give some intimation; "Let us go and die with him." He doubted not of a sufficiently extensive communion in this blessedness, *q. d.* There is enough for him and us all. And such apprehension we all ought to have of the blessedness of the heavenly state, into which we are to be intromitted by death, that it is enough for all that can be in any possibility to partake in it. So that the abounding plenitude of no one's portion can be any diminution to another's. The kind and nature of material, sensible good, hath a remarkable and most agreeable affinity to what is said, and what, upon very strict inquiry, one knows not how not to say, of matter itself, that it is perpetually divisible; but so, as that every part and particle is still less and less. Whereupon it cannot but be, that whatsoever any enjoy of terrene good, so much is detracted from the rest. Of intellectual, spiritual good, knowledge, wisdom, grace, glory, the case is quite different. Let any possess never so much, it nothing diminishes another's possession in the same kind. If another man be never so wise, good, or happy, it takes nothing from me; I may be as wise, good, and happy. At least, that hinders not, but I may.

How pleasant a contemplation is this! that in the vast and numberless regions of light, bliss, and glory, the blessed inhabitants are all drawing from the same fountain; solacing themselves in that fulness of joy, drinking in from those rivers of pleasure that flow from the Divine presence for evermore! All deriving, unto satiety, from that fulness that filleth all in all.

(8.) Preference of the society with holy ones in the heavenly state, above any to be enjoyed on earth. The words, as to their most obvious sense, seem to be full of this; With whom I would live, with him I would die. Is not this our common sense? Not that we can apprehend any thing in the very act or article of dying, that can make dying with one more desirable than with another; but it must be meant of what is to follow. We would not have death to part us. We would enjoy one another after death, but so as we did not before. 'Tis very probable our Lord and his disciples had formerly enjoyed pleasant hours with Lazarus, in his own house. But why doth Thomas, therefore, desire they might die to be with him? Excepting him, he might still have enjoyed the same society on earth, and of many other Christian friends besides. But we see his proposal concerned not himself only. 'Tis, Let us go die with him. He reckoned they should die, and be with him together. And that the state they should then be in, would have, in point of society and conversation, such advantages, above what their present state afforded, as were worth dying for.

And how can we but apprehend the vast difference? Whatever delight good men on earth have had in one another's society, they must then be better company than ever. How hard is it now to communicate our sentiments! We know not what our ways of converse shall hereafter be, but we know that such words as we now use are very slow, defective media, of conveying our minds and sense to one another. What a difficulty do we now find if we apprehend a thing clearly ourselves, to make another master of our notion! What circumlocutions do we need! What explications, to make another understand our meaning! And then those explications need further explication, and so we run ourselves into new difficulties, and entangle one another more and more. Most of our controversies arise from our mistaking one another's sense, though too often those mistakes are wilful with them who love strife more than truth; and it is industriously endeavoured to pervert each other's words, and put senses upon them quite besides, or against, our true intent. But if we speak and hear with the greatest candour and sincerity that is possible, we are frequently not understood aright, either through the unskilfulness of him that speaks, to choose the aptest words and forms of speech, or unattentiveness, incapacity, and dulness, in them that hear; frequently from both together. Hence is the conversation of Christians so little edifying, though they discourse of useful subjects, which, God knows, there is little of amongst us! Though much more than is commonly apprehended, proceeds from want of love, that should let us into one another's minds and hearts.

Our very sermons, when we study to make important things as plain as we can, are lost upon the most. Though here we see the advantage of a people's having a love to their minister, which is a mighty orator within themselves, and will make them endeavour to take in his heart and soul; as on his part, his love to them will make him willing, as we heard from the apostle, to impart, with the Gospel, his own soul.[x] But as to Christian converse in this our present state, besides the difficulty of understanding one another, all even of them who have great treasures of knowledge in them, are not alike conversable and communicative, nor any, at all times. The dearest friends often find one another indisposed, otherwise busy, morose, sour, and out of humour; apt to take, and perhaps to give, offence, on one hand, and the other. And whereas we should most intimately converse with ourselves; upon the mentioned accounts, we are now very often the worst company that can be to ourselves; through the darkness, confusion, intricacy, and incoherence of our own thoughts; the fervour and tumultuation of ill affections, and the sluggishness, and drowsy torpor of good. And in what case are we to please others by our converse, that have so much cause to be always, in a very great degree, displeased with ourselves?

When death shall have disencumbered, and set us free from all sorts of distempers, and brought us into the state of perfect and perfected spirits, how delectable will that society be! when all shall be full of divine light, life, love, and joy, and freely communicate, as they have received freely! How pleasant will it be, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God! To converse with angels! those wise, kind creatures, so full of profound knowledge and benignity; instructed by long, uninterrupted experience and observation of the methods of the divine government, and dispensation; highly pleased with our accession to the general assembly, that rejoiced in the conversion of a sinner, whereby but one was hereafter in due time to be added, much more in the glorification of so many, that are now actually added to them! What delightful communings will there be of the mysteries of nature! of the methods of providence! of the wonders of grace! of the deep and hidden counsels of God! In what part it shall be agreeable to his wisdom and good pleasure, to let them appear and stand in view.

The conferences at the transfiguration made the transported disciples say, 'tis good to be here; when the glory which, while it oppressed, pleased them. Though this

s 1 Thess. ii. 13. t Tit. i. 2. u Rom. xiv. 17. w Psal. xxxiv 8. x 1 Thess. ii. 8.

was but a transient view. But above all that is conceivable in that other state, how delectable will their society be in worship! In their unanimous adoration of the ever-blessed God, Father, Son, and Spirit! In how pleasant eternal raptures of delight and praise will all those excellent creatures be, that inhabit and replenish the vast realms of light and bliss: when all behold how the several kinds of being, light, life, excellency, and perfection, by a perpetual efflux, spring from the first, the Fountain of all being, the Parent of so glorious and so numerous a progeny, all God-like, and bearing the bright image of their Father! O the inexpressible pleasure of this consociation in worship, perpetually tendered with so absolute a plenitude of satisfaction in the dueness of it! and the gustful apprehension of what those words import, Worthy art thou, O Lord! each one relishing his own act, with just self-approbation and high delight: heightened by their apprehended perfect unanimity, and that there is among them no dissenting vote. Whence it cannot be but to worship God in spirit and truth must be to enjoy him. And that he is under no other notion, the more satisfying object of our enjoyment, than as he is the object of our worship. What room or pretence is there now left for unwillingness to die, on the account of relatives we have been wont to converse with in this world; when such an exchange as this is to be made by dying! But,

II. We are also to consider, There might be an intermixture in the temper of this good man's spirit, when he uttered these words, of somewhat faulty and blameable; which we are to be cautioned against.

(1.) There might be too little consideration had of the dignity and value of human life; of which the great God takes so particular care to guard and sustain it, both by law and providence. And of this creature man, so noble a part of divine workmanship, and whom he set over all the works of his hands, in this lower world. To propound throwing away at once so many such lives, seems somewhat too precipitant.

(2.) The words seem not to savour enough of that deference which is due to the God of our lives; whose prerogative it is to kill and to make alive; to measure our time, and number our days. It might have been said, at least, If God will, &c.

(3.) There might be in them too little gratitude for the mercies of life, or patience of the difficulties of it; somewhat like that of Jonah, Take now, I beseech thee, my life from me.

(4.) Too little regard to the business of life. It might have been more at leisure considered, Is the business done I was born for? Their special business, who were to be the apostles of our Lord, already called, (Matt. x. 1, &c.) and instructed in great part of the work of their calling, was apparently too little considered, especially how or for what his Lord was to die himself, so far as either from his own words, or from the prophets, might have been collected.

(5.) Nor, perhaps, enough, how awful a thing it was to die, to change states, and pass into eternity! This might, upon this account, be too hastily said. Good old Simeon seemed to have considered the matter more, when he said, Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, &c.

(6.) And there is reason to apprehend, in these words, too much displicency at the providence of God, in taking away such a man now at such a time; with some appearance of despondency concerning the Christian interest. This Lazarus is thought to have been a wealthy man, though he in the parable is represented otherwise. Christianity was, as yet, a little thing in the world. Our Lord had signalized himself by his wonderful works, and drawn many eyes upon him, that were at a gaze; but his heavenly doctrine, and the true design of his coming, had entered into the minds of but a few, and they of the meaner sort. Had any of the rulers believed on him? It was yet a dubious twilight, the dawning of the morning. The Spirit that was to convince the world, was not yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified.[y] Nicodemus, a rabbi, came to him, but by night. This cause, as still, according to human estimate, depended much on reputation. Men loved (till an overpowering influence bore down all before it) the praise of men more than the praise of God;[z] and believed not, because they sought honour one of another.[a]

It was, now, a mighty loss to have one such man drop, that lived so near Jerusalem, where our Lord's great work did much lie, but where he chose not to lodge: this was in Bethany, but two miles off, a convenient retreat. The master of the house is himself dislodged; and whereas though the foxes had holes, and the birds nests, the Son of man had not where to lay his head;[b] this disciple might probably think, Where shall be our next resort? Where is there a considerable person to be found, that will hereafter give us harbour and countenance? He might hence be induced even to utter his *conclamatum est*; and to this purpose say, now he is dead, Let us all go die with him. Their Lord and Master had before told them, of his being ere long to be taken from them; and, that his followers must count upon taking up their cross daily. And what, might he think, is to become of us, upon whom, left desolate, the stress is to lie of the Christian cause! What storms will be raised against us, whose province it must be, to plant and propagate a new religion in the world! the tenderest concern in all the world, and about which men are most apt to be enraged at any attempt of innovation! And by us, unlearned, uninterested, obscure, and contemptible men! By what he here says, he seems not afraid to die; but he seems afraid to live, and face the storm, and contend with the difficulties of that even hopeless undertaking, which he perceived himself and his companions designed unto. Rather than this, he seems to apprehend a present death was to be chosen.

And I, now, no way doubt, but any serious person, that shall be at the pains to commune with himself, will judge, there may be such quick turns of thoughts this way; and that, as those opposite senses of this passage do import, the variety and contrariety of principles that are in us, in this imperfect state, makes it no impossible thing, but that, amidst the various agitations of a musing mind, somewhat of grace and somewhat of sin, yea much of a holy and heavenly temper, with some degree of incogitancy, haste, and faulty distemper, might be vented together in such an expression.

And now for the use of it, we must have distinct respect to both these sorts of sense, which the words may admit of. And,

1. For whatsoever of good sense they have in them, let us endeavour to have it deeply impressed, and inwrought into our souls. So far as, upon good and self-justifying accounts, one may wish to die with another eminently holy and good, let us labour to be in that temper of spirit, that with all reverential submission to the wise, holy, and sovereign will of God, we may ever be ready to go with the first; a good man should need only leave to die. Consider, are we so loose from all worldly enjoyments and designs, as to be capable, when a holy man dies, of adopting these words, Let me die with him? Will they fit our spirits? Can we so far comport with them, as to avow it with a heart not reproaching us, that it is only obedience to the Supreme Ruler, not terrene inclination, that makes us willing to survive such as we see going off this stage before us? that if he, in whose hands our breath is, will have us still live, we can submit with patience; if he signify his mind we shall die, we can comply with gladness? But,

Do we find it otherwise? Doth the bent of our own spirits urge and press us downward, and fix us to the earth? Are we so within its magnetism? We have a worse evil to fear than bodily death. To be so carnally minded is death, in a far more horrid sense. This temper of mind, to prefer an earthly abode before the purity and bliss of the heavenly society, is so repugnant to the most constituent principles of a living Christian, his faith of the unseen world, his delight in God, his love of the Divine presence, and converse with the Father and Son in glory, his hatred of sin, and desire of perfect holiness, that he should rather take another name, than wear that of a Christian, in conjunction with the allowance of so unchristian a spirit; a temper that tends to subvert whole Christianity, and puts a man into a posture of hostility against the cross of Christ, and the very design of his dying. For in contradistinction

y John vii. 39. chap. xvi. 8. z Chap. xii. 43. a Chap. v. 44. b Luke ix. 58.

to them, whose conversation is in heaven, and from whence they look for the Saviour, are they become the declared enemies of his cross, who mind earthly things;[c] preferring an earthly before the heavenly state. And the apostle tells such (weeping, as he wrote) that their end will be destruction. This I must therefore say, and testify in the Lord, that if any will indulge themselves in such a temper of spirit; and whosoever goes, even of the most excellent of God's saints and ministers, they would (because they love the present world more) stay with the last; as to such, our preaching is vain, and their faith is vain. But if there have been any within the compass of your knowledge and acquaintance, of whom dying, or lately dead, you could say, Let me die with him, or die to be with him, of whom would you rather say it, than of the excellent Dr. Bates.

But do you expect I should give you a distinct and full account of him? Many of you know, or may easily apprehend, I have not been in circumstances by which it could be so much as possible to me. The surprising, overwhelming tidings of his death, with the signification of my being expected to do this part, first reached me, by just estimate, at about two hundred miles' distance. Nor did any thing to that purpose, from such as were concerned, come to my hands till a fortnight after his decease. At my return, towards the end of the week preceding this sad solemnity, I had my own charge, from which I had been long absent, to provide for against the Lord's day; after which only one day intervened, wherein thoughts that accompanied me in my way, were to be reduced into some order. But had I had never so much time and leisure, I cannot but reflect on what was said of that famous Roman, to give the just praises of Cicero, *Cicerone laudatore opus fuerit*:[d] *There was need of Cicero himself to be the encomiast.* No man knows how to speak becomingly of the excellencies of Dr. Bates, that hath not the eloquence of Dr. Bates! He did that office most laudably for divers others, for those reverend and truly great men, Dr. Manton, Mr. Clarkson, Dr. Jacomb, and the admirable Mr. Baxter. But now there is no man left to do it suitably for him, *i. e.* that both is fit and willing. So that this part comes to be devolved upon the unfittest among many.

Yet thus, while others have declined it, out of a modest opinion of its being above them, whose abilities, and conveniencies for the performance, did much more concur: this looks like an art and contrivance of Providence, to greaten him the more, that every one reckons him too great for their commendation: and that, consequently, he is to pass out of our world as one too big for our praises, with no encomium, or that which is next to none.

Though I first had the opportunity and great pleasure of his acquaintance above forty years ago, yet I have no present way while I am writing this, of knowing, or recollecting, with certainty, any thing of the earlier days of his life. As therefore the case is, the little I shall say of him, shall be, not by way of history, but of character. Nor in giving somewhat of that, can one well omit—

First, To take notice of, what must with every one come first in view, *viz.* his self-recommending aspect, composed of gravity and pleasantness, with the graceful mien and comeliness of his person. That was said upon no slight consideration of the nature of man, from unbribed common estimate, that whatever a man's virtuous endowment be, it is the more taking and acceptable, as coming—*e pulchro corpore, from a handsome well-framed body.* God had designed him to circumstances, and a station, not obscure in the world, and had accordingly formed him with advantage; so that his exterior, and first aspectable part, might draw respect. And though the treasure to be lodged there, was to be put into an earthen vessel yet even that was wrought, *meliore luto*, of finer or more accurately figured and better turned clay. He was to stand before kings;[e] you know in what relation he stood to one, as long as was convenient for some purposes; and how frequent occasion he had of appearing (never unacceptably) before another. His concern lay not only with mean men,[f] though he could tell also how to condescend to the meanest. His aspect and deportment was not austere, but both decently grave and amiable, such as might command at once both reverence and love; and was herein not a lying but a true picture of his mind.

I may (to this purpose) borrow his own words (and whose I could more rightfully borrow, or to so much advantage?) concerning that excellent person, Alderman Ashurst, whose fragrant memory will long survive the age he lived in. And, O that his example might govern in London as long as his name lasts! Of him the Doctor says,[g] A constant serenity reigned in his countenance, the visible sign of the divine calm in his breast; the peace of God that passes all understanding! And who could have said this but Doctor Bates! or so appositely have applied what had a higher author! So expressively! so fully! so truly! and justly was it spoken! But also, of whom could this have been more fitly said, than, *mutato nomine*, of Dr. Bates! How rarely should we see a countenance so constant and so faithful an index of an undisturbed, composed mind! Through that, if we look into this, how rich furniture of the inner man should we soon perceive and admire!

His natural endowments and abilities appeared to every observer, great, much beyond the common rate. His apprehension quick and clear. His reasoning faculty acute, prompt, and expert: so as readily and aptly to produce, and urge closely, the stronger and more pregnant arguments, when he was to use them; and soon to discern the strength of arguments, if he was to answer them. His judgment penetrating and solid, stable and firm. His wit never vain or light, but most facetious and pleasant, by the ministry of a fancy, both very vigorous and lively; and most obedient to his reason; always remote both from meanness and enormity. His memory was admirable, and never failed, that any one could observe, not impaired by his great age of seventy-four: insomuch, that speeches made upon solemn occasions, of no inelegant composition, (some whereof the world hath seen, though extorted from him with great difficulty, and by much importunity) he could afterwards repeat to a word, when he had not penned one word of them before. And his sermons, wherein nothing could be more remote from ramble, he constantly delivered from his memory. And hath sometime told me, with an amicable freedom, that he partly did it to teach some that were younger, to preach without notes. His learning, and acquired knowledge of things, usually reckoned to lie within that compass, was a vast treasure. He had lived a long, studious life; an earnest gatherer, and (as the phrase is) [h] devourer of books. With which he had so great an acquaintance, and they that were acquainted with him so well knew it, that one, who was for the dignity of his station, and the eminency of his endowments, as great a pillar and as excellent an ornament of the church, as any it hath had for many an age, hath been known to say, that were he to collect a library, he would as soon consult Doctor Bates, as any man he knew He was, indeed, himself a living one.

He knew how to choose, and was curious in his choice, Whatsoever belonged to the finer, and more polite sort of literature, was most grateful to him, when it fell into a conjunction with what was also most useful. Nothing mean was welcome into his library, or detained there, much less thought fit to be entertained and laid up in the more private repository of his mind. To speak of the particular parts of his learning wherein he excelled, were to trifle, when there are so many visible effects extant, that enough inform the world. His divine knowledge, and the abundant grace of God in him, have been eminently conspicuous the same way, in great part; but otherwise also. For his private conversation was so instructive, so quickening, in reference to what lay within the confines of religion and godliness, that no man of ordinary capacity could hear his usual and most familiar discourses, but either with great negligence, or great advantage.

When he hath been to consider a case of conscience, I have sometimes had opportunity to observe, with what wisdom, what caution, what tenderness, he hath spoken to it, and with what compass of thought; turning it round this way and that; most strictly regarding our sacred rule, and weighing all circumstances that concerned the case: but withal, taking occasion from thence (when the persons

c Phil. iii. 18, 19, 20.
e Prov. xxii. 29.
d Livius.
f Ibid.
g Epistle to the Funeral Sermon for Mr. Benjamin Ashurst, dedicated to Sir Henry.
h Hellen.

concerned have not been present) to magnify and adore the grace of God; which he would do most pathetically, and with great affection; for keeping us out of the way of temptation; which he thought was too little considered by Christians; and thereby saving us from the entanglements and perplexities of spirit, as well as from the scandals that befel many. I never knew any more frequent and affectionate in the admiration of Divine grace, upon all occasions, than he was; or who had a deeper sense of the impotency and pravity of human nature.

His discourses were usually (as our rule directs) savoury, as seasoned with salt, and such as might minister grace to the hearers. He was frequently visited by persons of higher rank, and that made no mean figure in the world. Of whom, some have acknowledged, that going abroad upon hazardous employments, they have received from him such wise and pious counsels, as have stuck by them, and they have been the better for afterwards. Though in his communing with the many friends, whom he irresistibly constrained to covet his most desirable society, he did not exclude the things that were of common human concernment, he still discovered a temper of mind most intent upon divine things. He did not look with a slight or careless eye upon the affairs of the public; but consider, and speak of them as a man of prospect, and large thought, with much prudence and temper; not curiously prying into the arcana of government, or reasons of state, which it was necessary should be under a veil; much less rudely censuring what it was not fit should be understood: but what was open to common view, he was wont to discourse of instructively, both as lying under the direction of Providence, and as relating to the interest of religion.

Nor was he wont to banish out of his conversation the pleasantness that fitly belonged to it; for which his large acquaintance with a most delightful variety of story, both ancient and modern, gave him advantage beyond most; his judicious memory being a copious promptuary of what was profitable and facetious, and disdaining to be the receptacle of useless trash. To place religion in a morose sourness was remote from his practice, his judgment, and his temper. But his discourses, taking in often things of a different nature, were interwoven with religion, and centred in it; especially such things as were most intimate and vital to it; of those things he was wont to speak with that savour and relish, as plainly showed he spake not forcedly, or with affectation, as acting a part; but from the settled temper and habit of his soul. Into what transports of admiration of the love of God, have I seen him break forth! when some things foreign, or not immediately relating to practical godliness, had taken up a good part of our time. How easy a step did he make of it from earth to heaven! Such as have been wont, in a more stated course, to resort to him, can tell, whether, when other occasions did fall in, and claim their part in the discourses of that season, he did not usually send them away with somewhat that tended to better their spirits, and quicken them in their way heaven-ward? With how high flights of thought and affection was he wont to speak of the heavenly state! Even like a man much more of kin to that other world than to this! And for his ministerial qualifications and labours, do I need to say any thing to themselves, who had the benefit thereof? Either them, who have so many years lived under his most fruitful, enlightening, quickening, edifying ministry? Whether week by week, as his beloved, peculiarly privileged charge at Hackney, that mournful, desolate people! who have been fed with the heavenly, hidden manna, and with the fruits of the tree of life that grows in the midst of the paradise of God; so prepared, and presented to them, and made pleasant to their taste, as few besides have ever had: but now sit in sorrow, hopeless of full, or any equal relief, but by transportation into that paradise itself, whence all their refections were wont to come! Or do I need to inform such inhabitants of London, as in a doubled three monthly course, have for many years, in throng-assembly, been wont to hang upon his lips? To whose, if to any one's in our days, the characters belonged, of the wise, and the righteous man's lips, which are said to disperse knowledge; and (which is therefore most agreeable) to feed many. Or can it be needful to acquaint the world, who have volumes of his discourses or sermons in their hands? Or tell them of their singular excellencies, who can as well tell me? I can speak to none of his great worth and accomplishments, as a richly furnished, and most skilful dispenser of divine knowledge, and of the mysteries of the Gospel of Christ, an instructed scribe, able to bring forth of his treasury things new and old; but who may say to me, as those Samaritan Christians, We believe him to be such, not because of thy saying, for we have heard (or read) him ourselves. And they may say so with judgment upon this proof, that shall consider both the select, choice, and most important matter of his tractates and sermons, published or unpublished. And the peculiar way and manner of his tractation thereof.

For the former: the choice of subjects; and of such materials of discourse as are to be reduced and gathered into them, discovers as much of the judgment, spirit, and design of the compiler, as any thing we can think of. When we consider what sort of things a man's mind hath been exercised and taken up about, through so long a course and tract of time; we may see what things he counted great, important, necessary to be insisted on, and most conducing to the ends, which one of his calling and station ought to design and aim at. And are thereupon to appeal to ourselves, whether he did not judge and design aright, and as he ought? As what could be of greater importance, than to discover the harmony of God's attributes, in the work of saving sinners? the final happiness of man? the four last things, &c.? What more important than that of spiritual perfection? Which last he dropped, as Elijah his mantle, when he was to ascend into that state, most perfectly perfect; wherein that which he had been discoursing of finally terminates. Read it, and invocate the Lord God of Elijah, saying, Where is he? Nor were his discourses of less consequence, that, in his stated course, he delivered to his constant hearers. They were always much allied to the lamp, and did not need to fear the brightest light. His last sermon in this place (who of us thought it the last! hearing it delivered with so much life and spirit?) challenges our re-consideration over and over. 'Twas about sins against knowledge, from Luke xii. 47. A warning to the age, uttered (though not faintly) as with his dying breath. O that it could have reached ears and hearts, as far as the concern of it doth reach! The sins of our days, of professors, and of others, are more generally sins against knowledge, than heretofore, and may make us expect and dread the more stripes that text speaks of.

As for his manner and way of handling what he undertook, we may use the words which he recites from the incomparable Bishop Wilkins concerning Mr. Baxter; which, no doubt, if there had then been the occasion, he would have judged not unapplicable here also: That he cultivated every subject he handled, and had he lived in an age of the fathers, he would have been one. His method, in all his discourses, might be exposed to the most critical censurer. What could be more accurate! And for his style, it was even inimitably polite, and fine; but to him so natural, that it was more uneasy to have used a coarser style, than, to others, so neat a one as his was. Nor is it to be thought strange, that there should be in this a peculiarity; style being to any man, as appropriate upon the matter, as his visage or voice: and as immediately depending on the temper of the mind, in conjunction with fancy, as that is, more or less, brisk, lively, and vigorous; as the other do on the complexion of the body, or the disposition of the organs of speech. They that would in this case attempt to force nature, would, I suspect, be very awkward at it, would bungle scurvily, and soon find, they had better be content to creep on all four, than aim to fly and soar with borrowed wings, or stolen feathers. If God with a man's nature gives a disposition of this kind, it may, in his younger years, admit of innocent improvement: but that which is most peculiar to any, in this respect, is what one insensibly slides into, with no more design than one hath to walk after this or that manner; by which yet many persons are known, and distinguishable from other men.

But I doubt not, that excellency in any such kind, as hath been anciently observed of poetry and oratory, must

† Prov. xv. v. chap. x. 7.

have its foundation in nature; and they that will strive against that stream, will soon perceive, that such proverbial sayings were grounded upon prudent observation and long experience, That a Mercury is not to be made of every log; and that Nothing is to be attempted *invita Minerva, or against one's genius*, and natural inclination. Therefore that monition, *Lege historiam, ne fias historia*, one may vary and say, *Cave, &c. Take heed of a proverb, lest thou become a proverb.* That is easy and pleasant which is natural.[k] And now when the grace of God supervenes, and doth exalt and sublimate nature, it makes that mean beginning, and its progress into use and custom, which is said to be a second nature, subservient to very high and excellent purposes; as is eminently conspicuous in the Doctor's peculiar way of preaching and writing: especially in his frequent most apt similitudes and allusions, to be attributed to a brisk and vivid fancy, regulated by judgment, and sanctified by divine grace, so as greatly to serve his pious purpose; to illustrate the truth he designed to recommend, and give it the greatest advantage of entering into the mind with light and pleasure; and at once both to instruct and delight his reader or hearer. And so much more grateful have his illustrations been, by how much the more they have been surprising, and remote from any forethought in them that read, or heard. And I may here freely put his most constant attentive hearers upon recollecting, whether he have not usually pleased them, by surprising them? (For I know there are surprisals ungrateful enough.) And in most sermons, whether they did not meet with what they did not expect from him; and might in vain have expected from any body else.

Some, it is possible, may find fault with that in this kind, to which they can do nothing like themselves; who yet, I hope, may admit of conviction of their own fault herein, by gentler means, than by being put in mind of the fable. They might upon the matter as well find fault, that God had made him a taller man than the most, perhaps than themselves; or of a more comely complexion, or that all were not of one stature, size, or feature. If any do, 'tis most probably such, to whom one may truly say, they blame what they could not mend, nor he help; at least, without much pain to himself, and to no purpose. One may venture to say, that in that fine way of expressing himself, which was become habitual to him, he much more pleased others than himself. For in the excellent Mr. Baxter he highly commends much another way, saying of him, "He had a marvellous felicity and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style: for his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words."[l] Very excellent men excel in different ways: the most radiant stones may differ in colour, when they do not in value.

His judgment in ecclesiastical matters was to be known by his practice; and it was such, that he needed not care who knew it. He was for entire union of all visible Christians, (or saints, or believers, which in Scripture are equivalent terms,) meaning by Christianity what is essential thereto, whether doctrinal, or practical; as by humanity we mean what is essential to man, severing accidents, as not being of the essence; and by visibility, the probable appearance thereof: and for free communion of all such, of whatsoever persuasion, in extra-essential matters, if they pleased. And this design he vigorously pursued, as long as there was any hope; desisting when it appeared hopeless, and resolving to wait till God should give a spirit suitable hereto; from an apprehension that when principles on all hands were so easily accommodable, and yet that there was with too many a remaining insuperable reluctancy to the thing itself, God must work the cure, and not man. Accounting also, in the mean time, that notwithstanding misrepresentations, it was better to cast a mantle over the failings of brethren, than be concerned to detect and expose them: knowing that if we be principally solicitous for the name of God, he will in his own way and time take care of ours. And in this sentiment he was not alone.

But now is this great luminary, this burning and shining light, (not extinct, but,) gone out of our horizon. We for a season rejoiced in this light, and are we not to mourn for its disappearance? Yet not without hope. O! the unconceivable loss of his domestical relatives! who in respect of his most private capacity and conversation, are deprived of such a head, father, and guide! Yet in this lies their advantage, that since nothing that is mortal can fill up his room, they are under a necessity to betake themselves thither, where the surest and fullest relief is to be had. Having in the mean time among mortals a far greater number of fellow-sufferers, and fellow-mourners, to bear a part with them in their sorrows, and ready to afford them all suitable consolation, than most in this world can be capable of expecting in such a case. Let those of his own peculiar charge, let those that were wont, though not so often, in a stated course, to hear him in this place, with all other his more occasional hearers, mourn, that they are to hear no more his weighty sentences, his sweet honey-dropping words: let them mourn that never heard to purpose, that were never allured, never won, that were always deaf to this charmer, though charming so wisely. Let those that have got good by him mourn, that in this way they are to get no more; those that have got none, that they have lost so much of their day; that they are to be addressed by this persuasive advocate for Christ and their own souls no more. Let his brethren, all of us, mourn, that we have lost so prudent, so humble, so instructive, so encouraging a guide, so bright an ornament from among us.

But let none of us mourn without hope. God will be a husband to the widow trusting in him, and the father of the fatherless, taking God in Christ for their father and their God. He hath not forgot the titles he hath assumed. He can also find or make for his widowed church, a pastor after his own heart: and the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, that gave his life for the sheep, though he was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore. All his hearers, though they are no more to hear his pleasant human voice sounding in their ears, if they attend and listen, may hear a divine voice crying after them, This is the way, walk in it. And let them know that the Gospel he preached is immortal, and never dies, though all flesh is grass; and his own books, though he is dead, yet speak. We his brethren were to follow him, as he followed Christ; who will himself be with us always to the end. The work wherein he was engaged was common to him and us. Herein if we follow him, though not with equal steps, faithfully endeavouring to turn many to righteousness, we shall shine as he doth, like the stars in the firmament, we need not be solicitous, though not with equal lustre; as one star differs from another in glory.[m]

The cause wherein he was engaged unto his death, and from which no offered emoluments or dignities could ever draw him, was not that of a party; for he was of none, and was of too large a mind to be of any, but that noble cause of union and communion with all Christians that hold the head. That cause is not dead with him. Now that he is dead, we are to say, as that is the voice of the Christian faith, of divine and brotherly love, Let us die with him, but not as it is the voice of despondency or despair. Let us covet to be with him in that blessed state; the reality whereof we believe, and of which our faith is to be to us the substance and evidence.

I know no good man that knowing him would not say, Let me die with him. I very well know who would: and if breasts could be laid open to inspection as by a glass, do know in whose breast this sense would be found, engraven as with the point of a diamond: O! that my soul were in his soul's stead; or if the Supreme Disposer had thought fit, or seen an equal fitness for translation, that I had died with him. But, knowing his much greater usefulness in this world, O! that I had died for him. For since 'tis expressly said, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,[n] a life that could regularly and effectually have redeemed his, had been laid down for many, in that one of holy, prudent, heavenly Dr. Bates. This is the sense of one not weary, blessed be God, of the business of life, and that enjoys as much of the comforts of life as any man can reasonably wish, scarce any one more. But is

k Παν φυσικον ηδυ.

l In his Funeral Sermon, page 90.

m 1 Cor. xv. 41.

n 1 John iii. 16.

must be confessed, as this world was not worthy of this servant of Christ, 'tis become far less worthy now so excellent a person hath left it. His love, his converse, was pleasant beyond what can be expressed! 'Tis now a grievance not to have a part with the silent mourners, when lamentations could freely have been poured forth, without noise or interruption! As the case is, necessity lays a restraint, and leaves it an easier thing to die than weep out; otherwise can one be shy, in a way that can admit it, to tell the world, that to live in it, now he is dead out of it, much less deserves the name of life! It can be felt, that those words, among the many divine raptures of that holy man,[o] have a most perceptible meaning; "When I got health, thou tookest away my life; and more, for my friends die." If one may innocently borrow words from so impure a mouth, they are very expressive; I scarce count myself a man, when without Jamblichus.[p]

Here were two souls knit together as the soul of one man! What there is of present separation shall be but for a little while. And by how much the separation is more grievous, the re-union will be with the stronger propension, and the more delightful everlasting cohesion. As also separation from this terrene clog will be much the easier: one great weight is added above, to pully up what ought to ascend thither. How can that but be a blessed state, into which he that is essential love hath caught up such a man! One in so great part transformed before into the same likeness, and fitted to dwell in love! And accordingly God took him, even kissed away his soul, as hath been said of those great favourites of heaven; did let him die without being sick; vouchsafed him that great privilege, which a good man would choose before many, not to outlive serviceableness. To live till one be weary of the world, not till the world be weary of him! Thus he prayed wisely, thus God answered graciously.

But be it far from us to say, Let us die with him, as despairing of our cause; if our cause be not that of any self-distinguished party, but truly that common Christian cause, of which you have heard. While it is the Divine pleasure to continue us here, let us be content and submit to live and own it, to live and serve it, to our uttermost. If ever God design good days to the Christian church on earth, this is the cause that must prevail, and triumph in a glorious conquest over death. But I must freely tell you my apprehensions, which I have often hinted, that I fear it must die first; I mean a temporary death; I fear it, for it hath been long gradually dying already; and spiritual diseases which have this tendency, are both sinful and penal. Lazarus's death and resurrection I think to have been meant, not only for a sort of prolusion to the death and resurrection of Christ, both personal, but mystical. I only say this for illustration, not for proof. That sickness and death of his, was not in order to a permanent death, but for the glory of God, that when the case was deplorate and hopeless, and he four days buried, he might surprisingly spring up again alive. I know not but the sickness and death of this our incomparably worthy friend, and (for ought I know of many more of us) may be appointed the same way to be for the glory of God; that is, as tending to introduce that death which is to pass upon our common cause; which such men help to keep alive, by their earnest strugglings, though in a languishing, fainting condition every hour.

Think me not so vain as to reckon exclusively the cause of dissenters the cause I now speak of; no, no, I speak of the common cause of all serious, sober-minded Christians, within the common rule or without it. I neither think any one party to include all sobriety of mind, or to exclude all insobriety. But I apprehend converting work to be much at a stand, within the pales that men have set up, severing one party from another, and without them. Few are any where brought home to God through Christ. And God knows too few design it, otherwise than to make proselytes to their several parties: and this is thought a glorious conversion. Serious piety and Christianity languishes every where. Many that have a name to live are dead, and putrified, already stink! Common justice and righteousness are fled from among us. Sincerely good and pious men die away in the natural sense apace. You know if deaths and burials should, in the weekly bills, exceed births, and other accessions to the city, whither this tends. When so many great lights are withdrawn, both such as were within the national church constitution, and such as were without it; is there no danger God should also remove the candlestick?

Our obduration and insensible stupidity portends a deadly darkness to be drawing on. And must such lives go, to make a way for God's anger? and lead on a more general and more dreadful approaching death? Oh! that God would rend the heavens and come down! He may yet melt our hearts, and make them flow at his presence, notwithstanding their mountainous, rocky height and hardness. This may be the means of saving some souls, and of deferring the common calamity. A great thing it would be to have it deferred. What a privilege would many servants of Christ count it, not to live to the day when the Spirit of the living God shall be generally retired and gone; and atheism, scepticism, infidelity, worldliness, and formality, have quite swallowed up our religion! While such men as we have lost lived, they did, and such do, as instruments, keep somewhat of serious religion alive, under our several forms, but as ready to expire. But though it should seem generally to have expired, let us believe it shall revive. When our confidences and vain boasts cease, The temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord! Lo, here is Christ, and there is Christ; and one sort ceases to magnify this church, and another that, and a universal death is come upon us; then (and, I am afraid, not till then,) is to be expected a glorious resurrection, not of this or that party; for living, powerful religion, when it recovers, will disdain the limits of a party. Nor is it to be thought that religion, modified by the devised distinctions of this or that party, will ever be the religion of the world. But the same power that makes us return into a state of life, will bring us into a state of unity, in divine light and love. Then will all the scandalous marks and means of division among Christians vanish; and nothing remain as a test or boundary of Christian communion, but what hath its foundation, as such, in plain reason, or express revelation. Then as there is one body and one Spirit, will that Almighty Spirit so animate and form this body, as to make it every where amiable, self-recommending, and capable of spreading and propagating itself, and to increase with the increase of God. Then shall the Lord be one, and his name one, in all the earth.

o Herbert.

p Julian Epist. ad Jambl.—σν—μη ονοα.

A FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR THAT VERY REVEREND AND MOST LABORIOUS SERVANT OF CHRIST IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY,

MR. MATTHEW MEAD,

WHO DECEASED OCTOBER 16, 1699.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE JOHN AND FRANCES, THE LORD AND LADY HAVERSHAM.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOURS,

THE request of the mournful widow, and other relatives of the worthy person deceased, concurring with my own inclination, left with me no room to deliberate concerning this inscription. I easily apprehend how quick and deep a sense you both have of the loss of such another valuable person from off this earth; having so lately borne your part, in lamenting the decease of one you much valued also. Upon which account I put into your hands a discourse on those words, John xi. 16. Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Such persons leave this world so fast, that it grows a more difficult choice with whom to live, than with whom to die. When on that sad occasion I did set myself to consider that passage of Holy Scripture, I had seen some expositors that made it a doubt whether that were meant of Lazarus, or of our Lord himself. Some of good note thought the latter: for which, was plausibly to be alleged what we find *v.* 8. and that in this verse 16. the words were spoken not to Christ, but to the fellow-disciples. That doubt was not to have been moved in an assembly, where was neither time nor a fit season to discuss it. And though I might more conveniently, I shall not say much to it now; only I judge, that without necessity the present coherence was not to be torn. When by the series of discourse the same *him* seems plainly to be referred to, in the close of the 15th verse, and of this 16th—Lazarus is dead, *v.* 14—nevertheless, let us go to *him*, *v.* 15.—Let us also go, that we may die with *him*. It was little needful to say to Christ, Let us go, whose mind appeared set upon going already; but to the disciples who drew back. Besides, that reverence might restrain from saying this to our Lord, when what was to be proposed was matter of hortation, not of inquiry. Though sometimes they feared even to ask him a question also; as Luke ix. 45. And they might the rather be now under a present awe, from the rebuke, or expostulatory answer, he had given them, for their objecting against going into Judea. Especially, so as not to signify a remaining fear, which he had so newly checked. Therefore Thomas's speech, directed to his fellow-disciples, but not out of Christ's hearing, (for we have no reason to suppose that he separated them from him, that he might say this to them apart,) is so ordered, as not to import fear of death, but love to the deceased.

If any should object, that Thomas could not mean dying *with* Lazarus, when he was told he was already dead. That scarce deserves answer to any one that understands the latitude of the particle rendered with, especially, that it frequently signifies after, and not always with. And very often notes nothing of time at all. And therefore may here mean no more, than let us go that we may die too, or die as well as he. All this I say, not that I have heard any person in our days object against, or plead for, this or that sense of these words; but knowing they have been differently understood, and this being the first opportunity I had to take public notice of the difference, I am not ill pleased that I have now this occasion of representing it to so competent judges, partly to prevent objection, or at least to show with what temper of mind any such different apprehensions, in matters of no greater moment, ought to be looked upon. Nor shall I here vie authorities of commentators that have gone this way, or that, in this matter. Therefore I name none: only some, of as great name as any, have judged this the more probable opinion, which I have followed.

Many instances might be given, wherein, when matters extra-essential to the sum of our religion, are delivered, one sense must be pitched upon, though another, very divers (of which there cannot be two) is not to be demonstrated impossible. In which case, I must prefer a tacit following that which one chooses, before a conceited confidence, and crying down of the other. For confident clamour neither admits light, nor tends to enlighten any body.

In the present case, it makes no difference to any disadvantage. For if we desire to be united in death, or in that state to which it introduces, with this or that holy man; to be with our blessed Lord in that state, must be much more desirable. But the departure of the excellent ones of the earth from it, leaves us less here of present attractive, and gives us a very threatening prospect and presage of what we are to expect for the future.

Your lordship's great respect to this servant of Christ, was even hereditary, and descended to him, by you, from your family; as I have often heard him acknowledge, with great sense of obligation. And, Madam, your ladyship's great value of him, though it might take its first rise from so near and judicious a relative, could not but receive a great increase from his known worth, and your own discerning judgment. I pray, not doubting it, that with whatsoever kindness you have received any prophet, or other servant of Christ, in that name, you may have a proportionable reward; and am, my most honoured lord and lady,

Your most obliged, humble servant,
in the work of the Gospel,
JOHN HOWE.

1 Tim. iv. 16.

—Thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

These words I principally design to insist upon at this time, and on this sad and mournful occasion; but not without retrospection to the foregoing verse, and the former part of this; which runs thus: verse 15. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Ver. 16. Take heed to thyself, and thy doctrine; continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. This whole foregoing context contains precepts, which, reduced to practice, afford an eminent example and pattern of a true Gospel preacher, or, as the words are, ver. 6. Of a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine. As these last words show the blessed end and issue of such a one's ministry, *i. e.* that he shall save himself; which must be looked upon as certain: and them that hear him; *i. e.* as much as in him lies, he shall herein do his part, and what is incumbent upon him, to the saving of his hearers. These latter words hold forth the double end which a minister of Christ is to pursue, the saving his own and his people's souls. The foregoing words, considered in reference to these, contain the *proper means* he is to use in order to this two-fold end. *i. e.* He is to meditate much on the great things of the Gospel. He is to be wholly *in* them,[a] as the words literally import which we read. He is to give himself wholly *to* them. He is to be continually increasing in the knowledge of God, and that so as not to know only to himself, but so as to make known what he knows. He is especially (though that be the common duty of Christians) to turn all to the use of edifying, Eph. iv. 29. that his profiting may appear to all. For though Timothy was at this time a young man, yet the most grown did always need to be still growing. None have here attained their *ne plus ultra*, but may still write for their motto, *plus ultra*, all their days; even Paul the aged, as he writes himself to Philemon, tells the Philippians, (both those epistles being dated from Rome, and supposed to be written about the some time, when he was first there,) that he had not yet attained, in point of the transforming knowledge of Christ, chap. iii. 10, 11. And unto what pitch soever he grew, it was still in order to communication. He writes to the Corinthians, that he determined to know nothing among them;[b] which is so to know, as to make known, nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. And to the Ephesians, that he would have them understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ;[c] no doubt that their salvation might be promoted thereby. And hereupon, in great part, depends a minister's own salvation; as hereafter will further appear. But besides, he is to take heed to himself, and see to the good state of his own soul; he is to take heed to his doctrine, not to corrupt, or handle deceitfully the word of God, but represent it sincerely, and as the truth is in Jesus. He is to continue in them; *i. e.* in the things he before exhorts him to meditate on, and be wholly in them; to continue in the faith of what was to be believed; and the practice of what was to be done, and in pressing and insisting on both. And all for the mentioned ends, that he might both save himself and those that hear him. And it is this two-fold end of a minister's care and labour, that will take us up at this time. This is that therefore, which, as God shall help, I am to evince, and apply, *viz.* That a minister of Christ is to make it his business, both to save himself and his hearers.—I am, as the text directs, to speak of these two ends conjunctly.—And here I shall not spend time, or use a liberty beyond what is obvious and useful, in inquiring into the counsel of God, why he makes use of such in order to the saving of others, as need to be saved themselves also. But shall principally insist, that since it appears to be God's pleasure to make use of such, they should therefore most earnestly concern themselves, and be very intent upon carrying on this design, *viz.* of their own, conjunctly with that of their hearer's salvation. Yet as to the former of these,

I. Somewhat it may be requisite to say, concerning this course and method, which we find the wisdom and good pleasure of God have pitched upon, for the carrying on a saving design in this world; to make use of such for the saving of others as do need to endeavour the saving of themselves. And here I shall briefly show—1. How it is to be understood;—2. How the fitness of this course may be evinced.

As to the former, we shall briefly note; that we must be cautious to understand aright, how, and in what sense, any one can be said to save himself, or another. Therefore,

(1.) It must be understood so, as to keep at a remote and awful distance from intrenching upon a divine prerogative. It being most expressly said, Isa. xliii. 11. I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour; and chap. xlv. 21, 22. There is no God beside me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me. Look to me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. Which plainly signifies, that in the highest sense, to save, is most appropriate to Deity, especially with an everlasting salvation, as 'tis expressed, ver. 17. of this chap. xlv. Israel shall be saved, in or by the Lord, with an everlasting salvation. And that to be so a Saviour, is equally incommunicable, as to be God. How gloriously doth he triumph in this excellent peculiarity of the Godhead, in his expostulations with Job, chap. xl. 9. Hast thou an arm like God! *q. d.* "Come, let us compare; stretch out that weak, withered, ulcerous arm of thine, Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency, array thyself with glory and beauty; try if thou canst make thyself shine in God-like splendour; cast abroad the rage of thy wrath; behold every one that is proud and abase him. Try thy power upon thy fellow-mortals. See if thou canst crush all the haughty ones of this world, bring them down, and bind their faces in the dust of the grave. And (to recall thee to the greater things mentioned before) try if thou canst form me such another earth as this, establish its foundations, lay its corner-stone. If thou canst countermand the motions, bind up the influences, of the stars in the heavens;" then will I confess unto thee, that thy own right hand can save thee, ver. 14. It is, it seems, as much above created power to be a Saviour, as to be the Creator or Ruler of the world. And how should we dread to think of usurping the title and office of the great Immanuel, the Saviour, who is therefore called Jesus, because he was to save his people from their sins, Matt. i. 21.

(2.) Yet there is a true sense wherein the saving act and power are otherwise and very variously ascribed. Sometimes to faith, Luke vii. 50. Thy faith hath saved thee. Sometimes to hope; We are saved by hope, Rom. viii. 24. Sometimes to baptism, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, &c. Sometimes to husbands and wives in reference to one another, 1 Cor. vii. 16. So is the Gospel called the Gospel of our salvation, Eph. i. 13. And to you is the word of this salvation sent, Acts xiii. 26. So are we exhorted to save ourselves, Acts ii. 40. And others, Jude 23. Others save with fear. Thus in lower matters, is the act of writing, for instance, ascribed to the pen, to the hand that uses it, and to the writer himself, that moves both, and we have no difficulty to understand those different forms of speech: nor is there a greater difficulty in the present case, so to ascribe to the creature the low subordinate agency, which in distinct capacities may belong to it, as in the mean time to reserve to God and Christ the supreme agency, which is most peculiar and appropriate to divine power and grace, 1 Pet. i. 5. Eph. ii. 8.

2. We now come next to show, that it was very manifestly agreeable to the most accurate wisdom of God, to employ such in the design and work of saving others, as were themselves concerned, and needed to be saved too, that were to be upon the same bottom themselves with the rest; and to venture their own souls, and their everlasting concernments, the same way, and into the same hands. And this we shall labour to clear and make evident by degrees.

(1.) It was fit, since creatures were to be employed in this work, to make use of intelligent creatures, such as could understand their own errand, and act with design in pursuance of it.

(2.) Mankind was universally lost, so as all do need being saved themselves.

a Ἐν τούτοις ἴσθι. In a better than the Poet's sense, scire tuum nihil est.

b 1 Cor. ii. 2.

c Eph. iii. 4.

(3.) Therefore no intelligent creatures else could be employed herein, but the unfallen angels.

(4.) We may adventure to say after God, and when he hath so determined the matter himself, though it was not fit for us to have said it before him, as if we would direct the Spirit of the Lord, or as his counsellors would instruct him, Isa. xl. Rom. xi. that it was more suitable to make use to this purpose of sinful men, than of sinless angels. Let us sever and lay aside herein, what may at first sight seem specious, but is really not considerable in this matter, as that men, in the same miserable circumstances with those whom they are to persuade, that they may save them, will be so much the more earnest and importunate, use so much the more pressing arguments, as having been upon the brink of hell and the borders of destruction, for we suppose such as are most likely to promote the salvation of others, to have been made sensible of their own undone, lost state, and to be in a way of recovery themselves. But hereupon it may also be supposed, they will therefore so much the more pathetically plead with sinners. Their knowledge of the terrors of the Lord will urge them to persuade men, 2 Cor. v. 11. and make them eloquent at it. But what? more than angels? When the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. supposes one speaking with the tongue of men and angels, doth he not intend a gradation, and signify the latter far to excel? And are we to suppose that the benignity of their own natures, their kindness to man, and their perfect conformity, and obediential compliance and subjection, to the will of their sovereign Lord, would not have obliged them to do their uttermost, if he had sent them upon such errands? We cannot doubt it. But,

[1.] It is apparent that what the blessed God doth in pursuance of this saving design, he doth to the praise of the glory of his grace, and that it might appear the more conspicuous, in the whole conduct of this affair.

[2.] That it is not within the compass of any created, no, not of angelical, power, to change the hearts of men, and turn them to God. If angels were the constant preachers in all our assemblies, they could not with all their heavenly eloquence convert one sinner, if the immediate divine power did not exert itself. The people are willing in the day of his power, who was God-man, as Psal. cx. 3. The Jews at mount Sinai received the law by the dispensation of angels, yet kept it not, Acts vii. 53.

[3.] Yet if God should put forth his own power, by such a ministration; if angels should appear in glorious array among us, and speak to men with greater advantage, and more persuasive eloquence, than we can conceive; and marvellous effects by divine concurrence should ensue; those great effects among a sort of creatures led by sense, and who judge by the sight of the eye, would all be ascribed to the visibly glorious instrument, not to the supreme Agent, who is invisible and out of sight; even as in effects of another kind, the invisible power and Godhead that do all, are little regarded by stupid man, whose dull eye stays and rests in the visible outside, and fixes his mind there too.

[4.] Therefore the rich treasures of the Gospel are put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be, *i. e.* might appear to be, of God, and not of the inferior instrument, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

[5.] In this way of dispensation, wherein God speaks to men liable to the same passions with themselves, he accommodates himself to their frail state, who cannot bear glorious appearances; and to their own option and desires, who say to Moses, (Exod. xx. 19.) Speak thou to us and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die. When they had heard the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words, accompanied with thunders and lightnings, they entreated that they might hear no more, Heb. xii. 19. The celestial glory, while our mould and frame is dust, doth more astonish than instruct. Those soft and pleasant words, This is my beloved Son,—hear him, spoken by a voice from the excellent glory in the transfiguration, made the disciples that heard them sore afraid, and fall on their faces, Matt. xvii. How would it unhinge the world, and discompose the whole state of civil affairs, if all conversions were to be as Saul's was, when he became Paul, with such concomitant effects, not only on himself but all others present, especially being wrought (as most conversions may be) in numerous assemblies, the convert struck blind for some days, and all that were in the place speechless! Perhaps we have one such instance to let us see how inconvenient it were such instances should be common, or that this should be God's ordinary way of converting and saving sinners.

[6.] The holding of men in this world under the ministry of men, not of angels, in reference to the affairs of their salvation, is certainly more suitable to the condition of probationers for eternity, and another world; and more aptly subservient to the business of the judgment day, when all the talents men were intrusted with, their natural endowments and faculties, as well as additional advantages, are to be accounted for. We shall hereafter understand better, but may, in good measure, conjecture now, why there is so fixed a gulf by the wisdom and counsel of God, between the two worlds, the visible and the invisible, and so little commerce between them.

And whereas in the Old Testament the apparition of angels was more frequent, that passage, The world to come being said not to be put in subjection to angels, seems to signify, the time after the Messiah's appearing should be more entirely left to the conduct of a Gospel ministry, as the connexion, Heb. ii. ver. 4, 5. intimates.

[7.] And though the compassions of men, who have been in danger to perish themselves, cannot be supposed more powerfully to influence them, unto an earnest endeavour of saving them that are in the like danger, than the kindness and benignity of angels would do, if they were so employed; yet their concern to save others, who are also to be saved themselves the same way, is likely, more easily, more generally, more sensibly, to be apprehended by those others, to whom they are to apply themselves upon this account. They have kinder thoughts of one another than they are like so have of a superior order of creatures. Their own flesh and blood is nearer akin to them; yea, they are more apt to love one another (and consequently to apprehend one another's love) than the blessed God himself. Which is more than intimated in that of that holy apostle, 1 John iv. 20. He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen? Things affect us not merely as they are, but as they are understood. Ministers cannot be kinder to men's souls than the blessed angels, among whom there is a joy for the conversion of a sinner, much more pure, exalted, and sublime, than a human breast is capable of; and, in proportion, more fervent desire of such conversions: but their propensions towards us, though they should be expressed by counsels and precepts that tend to our good, would be less apprehended by most men; they carrying a severity with them, which makes them need such insinuative recommendations, as slide more easily into their minds from creatures of their own order.

[8.] Our Lord himself was so concerned for the saving of souls, as who could be besides? But though before the flood he is said to have preached to the old world, 'twas by his Spirit in the ministry of Noah, a man like themselves, to whom he preached. But when he thought fit to preach immediately himself, he put on flesh, and dwelt, or did tabernacle, among men as one of them, John i. 14. So Moses foretold: A prophet like to me shall God raise up, him shall you hear.[d] So his terror was not to make us afraid. And though his compassionateness towards us is argued from his being tempted, and compassed with infirmities,[e] as we are, that cannot be understood as if hereby he became more gracious and merciful towards us in himself, but his being so, was the more apprehensible to us.

[9.] The steadiness of the course God hath taken in this matter, shows what his judgment was of the fitness of it; who doth all things according to the counsel of his own will, Eph. i. 11. 'Tis observable, that when our Lord was now about to ascend, he fixes a ministry that he promises his presence unto, always, or every day, unto the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Ascending on high he gave (among other) these gifts to men, (even to the rebellious, Psal. lxviii.) apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, Eph. iv. 8—11. And that he might put an

d Acts iii. 22. from Deut. xviii.

e Heb. iv. 15.

honour upon this ministry, when he designed the Gospel to be preached to Cornelius, and his relatives; though he prepares Peter by a vision, and sends an angel to Cornelius, 'twas not to preach to him, but to direct him to send for Peter to preach to him and his; who tells him, when he fell at his feet, I also am a man, Acts x. We are human preachers, though from a Divine Master and Lord; and of a divine word.

II. But now the mind and counsel of God being sufficiently evident in this matter, both in the fact and in the fitness of it, to make use of such, for promoting the common salvation, as do need themselves to partake therein; we come now to show, that the ministers of the Gospel of Christ ought to be very intent upon the business of their own salvation, conjunctly with that of them that hear them; and of theirs with their own. There is a double obligation meeting upon a minister of the Gospel; that of the law of nature, and of the law of his office; he is to comply with both. Nature obliges him to intend his own salvation; his office, theirs that hear him. The same authority lays him under the one obligation and the other. For he that is the author of nature, is the author of his office too.

1. He ought so to mind the concern of his people's salvation, as not to neglect his own. This is so evident in itself, that it would be superfluous to speak to it, were it not that we, as well as they to whom we preach, do need to be put in remembrance of very important things, though we know them, 2 Pet. i. 12. To know and to consider, we not only may distinguish, but do too often separate. And there are divers things to be considered to this purpose.

(1.) That the royal law, as 'tis called, James ii. 8. which requires us to love our neighbour as oneself, makes love to ourselves, *i. e.* not merely which we bear, but which we owe to ourselves, the measure of that which we ought to have for our neighbour. And that which ought to be the measure in any kind, should be the most perfect in that kind; and must oblige us to love first our most noble self, our own souls.

(2.) 'Tis gross hypocrisy to seem earnestly intent upon saving other men, and to be neglectful of one's own salvation. 'Tis sin only which endangers both; meant by the mote and the beam, Matt. vii. 3, 4, 5. And our Saviour, we see there, stigmatizes such a one with the brand of a hypocrite, that is officious to take out the mote from his brother's eye, but never concerns himself to cast out the beam from his own eye.

(3.) 'Tis a scandalous and an ignominious absurdity, as the apostle's sharp expostulations imply, Rom. ii. 19—22. to take upon oneself to be a guide to the blind, a light to them that are in darkness, to take up with having a form of knowledge and of the truth in the law; and to teach others, and not to teach oneself! Preachest thou (as he adds) a man should not steal, and dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, by breaking the law dishonourest thou God? This is that which makes the name of God be blasphemed among the Gentiles; as he tells us 'tis written, referring to some texts in the Old Testament, Ezek. xvi. 47—52. chap. xxxvi. 22. 'Tis a blackening thing when it can be said, I was keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept, Cant. i. 6. Our Lord speaks of it as a reproachful proverb, which he, knowing the hearts of men, observed some were apt to misapply to him, Luke iv. (noted to have been in use among the Greeks, and which with that empire had reached Judea,) Physician, heal thyself. It would be very opprobrious to us who are in the ministry, if it could be truly said to us, we seem concerned at the diseasedness that appears in our flocks, but overlook the diseases and distempers of our own souls. That was meant for a bitter reproach to our Lord dying upon the cross, He saved others, himself he cannot save. To us, if it might be truly said, it must be a just reproach as well as bitter; our saving ourselves being our duty enjoined us, and tending to the saving of others; whereas our Lord's saving himself, in the sense intended by those scoffers, was against the law he was then under; and against his own design, tending to overthrow it, and leave them to perish, whom he was dying to save.

(4.) The observable neglect of the design to save our own souls, would defeat and destroy the other design of saving theirs that hear us. For who can think us serious in our preaching, or that we believe ourselves in what we say, if we manifestly decline ourselves that way of salvation which we propose to others? We tempt men to infidelity if we live like infidels.

It was a cutting repartee made by an atheistical person, to one, that leading an ill life, yet professed to wonder that the other, the argument for a Deity being so plain and cogent, did not own there was a God; the other replied, he much more wondered, that he who did own him, should yet live as he did! This tends to overthrow all our preaching. Though our Saviour directs to do as they said, who sat in Moses' chair, not as they did; because they said and did not; yet he did not thereby justify those self-repugnant teachers; for his reflection upon them is sufficiently severe. And we are to consider in the case, not merely what man's duty is, but what their dispositions are. Not what they ought, but what they are apt to do. If they think we do but act a part, when we speak never so movingly to them, they will be little moved by all that we can say. They will be more apt to conclude, that we who have studied and searched into the matters of religion more than they have done, have found some flaw at the bottom, and perceive the very foundations of it to be infirm; and therefore practice not according to the doctrines and rules of it. But that for our gain, because it was the calling we were bred to, and we know not how else to live, we are content, and some way constrained, to keep up the forms we found in use; and maintain them that they may maintain us.

(5.) Yet when it shall be found, as upon strict inquiry it cannot but be, that the foundations of religion are more firm than those of heaven and earth, how dismal will it be to have preached to others, and ourselves to be cast away! 1 Cor. ix. 27. For as by loose, licentious walking, we hazard other men's souls, which we should endeavour to save; so we more certainly lose our own. God may save them some other way, and by other, more apt instruments; but we have little reason to expect that we shall save our own, either while we design it not, (as if we were to be saved by chance,) or, much less, if we counteract any such design. Which we may, most destructively by that single instance, which the apostle, in that last-mentioned place, refers to; an indulgent intemperance; or not keeping our bodies in subjection; in servitude, or in a serviceable temper, as the word δουλαγωγεῖν imports, to subdue them into the state of servants; wherein rather than fail, one would use the severity which this other word ὑπωπιάζειν there signifies. It is plain, that if we live after the flesh we must die, Rom. viii. 13. There is one law for ministers and people. And it is only by the Spirit we are so to mortify the deeds of the flesh that we may live. How dismal when a minister's own breath poisons him! when the very Gospel which he preaches is a deadly odour[f] to himself! How horrid when a shepherd is the leader of the Epicurean herd!

(6.) But if by neglecting visibly the Gospel way of saving himself, he not only hazard but actually destroy other men's souls, together with his own, he then perishes under a much heavier load of guilt, than another man can, that was not under his obligations. As his obligation was double, so is his guilt. When sinful, vicious inclination hath depraved his mind, put out the eye of his practical understanding, so that the blind leads the blind, both fall into the ditch; but he falls much the deeper, having the other's destruction charged upon him, together with his own. Such teachers as bind heavy burdens for others, which they will not touch, fall under an aggravated wo. And the case is the same with them that prepare and set before their hearers the most nutritive and delectable fare, which they will not taste. And for that reason, perhaps, the people will not feed on them, because the preachers themselves too evidently appear to have no taste or relish of them.

f 2 Cor. ii. 16. ὀσμή.

2. The ministers of Christ ought to conjoin the serious design and earnest endeavour of saving them that hear them, with the design and endeavour of saving themselves. They are not to be so bound up within themselves, as only to mind their own things, though of this most noble kind.

(1.) The law of nature obliges them to it, which extends its obligation as far as human nature extends. And must therefore include them with the rest of mankind under the same common notion, *viz.* them who are ministers, not as they are such, for nature hath not made them ministers, but as they are men. Whom the royal law, mentioned before, requires to love their neighbour as themselves; and therefore to seek another's felicity, not before, but as their own. We are taught to count it an unnatural barbarity, when we see any pressed and pinched by bodily wants and miseries, to hide ourselves from our own flesh, Isa. lviii. 7. How much more, if we see immortal souls in danger to be lost and perish, that are of the same make and capacity with our own!

(2.) The law of Christ, as such, obliges Christians to the same thing. Which is not, in this instance, therefore a diverse law, but hath a different stamp and impress, as being the law of the kingdom of God in Christ. We are to bear one another's burdens, so fulfilling the law of Christ, Gal. vi. 2. What so weighty a burden can there be upon any man as this, the importance of his eternal salvation? And which is plainly here referred to, when we are required to endeavour the restoring of such as have been overtaken, and lapsed into sin, by which the precious soul is hurt and endangered; should they be left to sink under such a burden. Christians are elsewhere required to have compassion on such as they see in such danger, to save them with fear, and pull them as firebrands out of the fire, Jude 23. These are obligations common to ministers with others. But,

(3.) The law of their own office lays upon them an obligation peculiar, as such, to themselves. What serves their office for, but this, as the principal end and design of it? What is it meant for, but to gather in souls to Christ, and confirm them in him? Because there is salvation in no other; nor is there any other name given among men, by which any can be saved, Acts iv. They are the messengers of the glad tidings of peace. Their business is so well known, even in hell itself, that a spirit from thence speaks it out, These are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation, *i. e.* to human creatures, of whom the possessed person was one, Acts xvi. 17.

(4.) They are obliged by the example of their blessed Master, our Lord Jesus himself, the primary Saviour by office; whom they are both to imitate, and to serve in this merciful design. Christians are so far to imitate them, as they do Christ, (1 Cor. xi. 1.) which implies their obligation to imitate him, as the word μιμηταί, there used, signifies. The great salvation, which none that neglect, can escape vengeance, began to be spoken by the Lord himself, then by them that heard him, and so on, by others that succeed in the same office. This is following Christ in the way of imitation, as in the mentioned place. And we are required to have the same mind in us, which was in Christ, Phil. ii. 5. and are told wherein, ver. 6, 7, 8. which read over at leisure, and consider, what was that deep humiliation and suffering for, but the salvation of souls. And consider that this is said, as to the saints at Philippi, so particularly to the bishops and deacons there; which shows their common and their special obligation both together. And now, can we behold with what compassions and in what agonies, even unto blood, our blessed Lord pursued this design, and not feel a constraint in our spirits, in our lower sphere, and capacity, to serve it also to our uttermost?

(5.) They are obliged by the peculiar advantages they have for this work, and those they expect by it.

[1.] They have special advantages for it from their very calling, being separated to the Gospel; taken off from other business, to give themselves (as in this context) wholly to this. They are supposed therefore to know more of the concernments of souls, of the terrors of the Lord, (2 Cor. v. 11.) whence, therefore, they are to persuade men; of the nature of sin, and how it entangles men's spirits; of the wiles of Satan, and how he waits for advantages to destroy them; of the foundations of religion, and by what arts they are endeavoured to be subverted and shaken, and by what means and methods they are to be demonstrated or established; of the mysteries of the Gospel of Christ, and how they are to be unfolded; to have more special assistances from heaven in their work, according as they faithfully mind it: Christ's promised presents therein, even to the end. These are talents, with others, tending to the obtaining of these, which they are to be accountable for. And hereby they are strongly obliged, with their own, to intend earnestly the salvation of other men's souls.

[2.] They expect great advantages by it: that since nothing is more grateful to our Lord Christ, than the progress of this saving work, he will bountifully reward them that faithfully serve him in it: that if they be steadfast and immovable, abounding in this work of the Lord, (as he hath not a greater, now in doing, in this world,) their labour in him shall not be in vain. They shall hear from him, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord. If they turn many to righteousness (or endeavour it with sincere minds) they shall shine as stars in the firmament. And in the mean time, the honour and the pleasure of serving that mighty Redeemer, and lover of souls, in so glorious a design, have in them a very excellent reward; and which cannot but be esteemed such by a right mind.

(6.) They are obliged by the exigency of their own case. They cannot, as that is stated, neglect the design of saving other men's souls, without forfeiting their own. If they warn them not, over whom, as watchmen, they are set, they perish, but their blood will be required at their hands. It is a mighty trust they stand charged with, which if they discharge not, they are liable to accusation and condemnation, as false and faithless servants; perfidious to the souls of men; traitorous to the King of kings—whose interest they will have betrayed, being his agents and ministers in his kingdom of grace; about the prosperous state of which kingdom, with the successful progress of the affairs of it, he is most deeply concerned.

And now from this conjunct consideration of these two great ends, which a minister of Christ is to propound to himself, I might proceed to consider them severally, and apart; but this the case doth not require, it being easy to sever what hath been said to the one and the other; nor do our limits allow it.

We therefore go on to the more necessary use of the whole. To this purpose we collect,

1. That this world is universally in a very miserable state. For it is the business of Christ's ministers, to endeavour both the salvation of them that hear them, and their own.

(1.) The salvation of them that hear them. This is very indefinite; let who will be the hearers, they are supposed to be such as need to be saved. The object of their ministry is all nations, and every creature, *viz.* that is or shall be capable of being taught the way of salvation. Therefore all nations are deluged by the destructive evils, from which they are to be saved; and the world is every where inhabited by miserable creatures. We are told, that sin and death have passed upon all men, (Rom. v. 12.) and all the ends of the earth are invited to look unto God in Christ, (as the application of this context, Phil. ii. shows,) that they may be saved, Isa. xlv. 22. Whereas therefore the ministers of the Gospel of salvation, wheresoever they can obtain to be heard, are to endeavour the salvation of their hearers; it shows they can speak to none who stand not in need of saving mercy.

(2.) And that they are also to save themselves as well as them that hear them, more fully shows the absolute universality of the ruin that hath befallen this world; that there are among men none to be found that may be employed in saving others, but who are of the lost themselves, and so far drowned in the common deluge of perdition and destruction, as to need his help, as well as the rest, who came to seek and save them who are lost; and to stretch out to him craving hands, with that crying voice, Lord, save us, we perish.

2. The common stupidity of this wretched world, is hereupon most observable and amazing, that so few such cries are sent up to heaven! Men are involved in a common ruin, overtures are made to them of a common salvation,

but they are in reference hereto destitute of common sense, i. e. of such sense as is common in less important cases. Their misery lies in their having lost God; but little do they apprehend this loss. Amidst their other miseries, they cry out when some that are mightier oppress others, but none says, Where is God my Maker? Job xxxv. 9, 10. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if any will understand, and seek after God; but they are every one gone back, or are in an averse posture; none doth this good, no, not one, Psal. xiv. and liii. None, till he give an effectual touch to their drowsy spirits; and say, inwardly and vitally, to their hearts, Seek ye my face, so as to make their hearts answer, Thy face, Lord, will we seek, Psal. xxvii. 8. Preventing grace doth this, otherwise they feel no need of God, they miss him not, are content to be without him in the world; yea, say to him, Depart from us. Distance from him is chosen and desired; from him whose offspring we are, who is the Father of spirits, their parent, their life, their blessedness; of whom they are, and to whom if they tend not, they cannot but be miserable. It is the salvation of the soul that is the end of faith, (1 Pet. i. 9.) that faith by which we are to come to God, believing that he is, and will be, the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; being redeemed to God by the blood of his Son, (Rev. v. 9.) and who suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, (1 Pet. iii. 18.) and who upon his suffering intercedes for the same purpose; and is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession for them. But this salvation of the soul, this coming to God, or redemption by Christ, and his intercession thereupon, who looks after? Neither the end, the salvation of their souls, coming back to God, nor his method for attaining this end, are regarded, or so much as thought on. To have this flesh saved from any thing that is grievous to it, every one covets, and endeavours in vain; it must, however, rot in the dust, and be, in the mean time, a prey to worms. Its own father, mother, and sister, will devour it, Job xvii. 14. The Father of their spirits would save and satisfy them, but him they shun, and will not know.

Who that observes how men spend their days, even under the Gospel, which makes their time a day of grace, wherein they should be working out their salvation, can think they have any concern to be saved? Their life is continual trifling, some pass their days in mirth and jollity; doth this signify any sense of misery, or fear of perishing, and that destruction from the Almighty is a terror to them? These are not more idle, than others are idly busy to get estates, and a name on earth; but what is this to their being saved? They are liable to the common more sensible miseries of life, and they are without God; but this is no misery with them. This misery is their element, and burdens them not. Were their present case, and future danger, in this respect, apprehended and felt, how full of outcries would this world be; O we are lost and perishing! Such cries would ring through the earth, and pierce heaven! But the same carnality that is death, (Rom. viii. 6.) and makes them miserable, makes them stupid too, and insensible of their misery. And are these reasonable souls, intelligent, immortal minds and spirits, that are thus stupified! turned into such clods and stones! O deplorable case! Methinks such an office set up in the world, of men that are to save their own and other men's souls, should make them consider, and bethink themselves, What is it for? It must have had an original, and so it hath a divine aspect, a taste of heaven upon it; and must have an end suitable to the wisdom and grace of Heaven, which claims to be entertained otherwise than with neglect and contempt! And indeed this leads to take notice more expressly, in a further inference,

3. That there is a saving design on foot in the world; set on foot by the blessed God himself. Otherwise in so great a ruin as is come upon this wretched world, what could it signify, for any man to offer at saving either himself or others? How vain an attempt were it for any man, out of so deep and horrid a gulf of impurity, misery, darkness, and death, to think of lifting up himself, and of plucking up others, as high as heaven! This intimation carries hope with it. It is a voice from heaven to such as are so employed, as Timothy was, O save thyself, and as many as thou canst besides. It takes away all pretence for despair; God puts not men upon vain attempts. A lively hope ought to spring from hence. And we are saved by hope, (Rom. viii. 24.) as without hope no man would ever design for salvation, or any thing else. Hope is the engine that moves the world, keeps the intelligent part of it in action every where. No man could rationally stir in pursuit of any design, whereof he despaired. But as to other designs, men's hopes are commonly self-sprung, and end in shame. But when one can say, Lord, thy word hath caused me to hope; thou hast put me upon aiming to be saved, and to save others, it speaks this to be a just and a hopeful undertaking. I will therefore set about working out my own salvation, (and with my own, other men's, as far as is within my compass,) expecting he will graciously set in with me, and work in order hereto, to will and to do of his own good pleasure, without which all mine will be lost labour.

4. We further collect, That the blessed God is most intent upon this design. That which this supposes, and that which it imports, speaks him intent. It supposes he hath appointed a sovereign Saviour set over this work; otherwise there could be none subordinate. It imports he hath settled an office on purpose; made it some men's special business, to intend (as every one ought) his own salvation, and withal to give himself up to this great work, the saving all he can. An office set up for the saving of souls ought to be a great thing in our eyes; and is a standing testimony for God, how willing he is men should come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved.

5. They that bear this office should be highly honoured for their work's sake. For how glorious an employment is it to be instrumental to salvation! to be in any kind saviours! I could tell you of some great princes in the pagan world, that to their other splendid titles have had the addition of *Soter, a Saviour*; as to some others, the Destroyer of Cities hath been given as a name of reproach. And you do know who hath the name of Apollyon, or Abaddon, Rev. ix. 11.

6. It highly magnifies the wisdom, power, and sovereignty of God, that he can and will make use of so mean instruments, for so high and glorious a purpose. For what end and purpose can be greater than the recovery and salvation of souls, so deformed, miserable, and lost, as the souls of men universally were? And what instruments could be meaner, or more vile, than such as needed to be saved themselves, with the same salvation? That God should make use of them who were darkness, (Eph. v. 8.) to enlighten the world, (Matt. v. 14.) of such as were but sinful flesh, (John iii. 6.) to be able ministers of the Spirit, (2 Cor. iii. 6.) of such as had minds that were enmity against God, (Rom. viii. 7.) to reconcile men to himself, (2 Cor. v. 20.) these are some of the wonders he works among the children of men. When he hath converted some to use them (first for the converting of others, and then) for the strenghening of their converted brethren.

7. The ministers of Christ are to be examples to them over whom they are set. They are to be so in the beginning of their course, in their first turn to God, though then in a more passive sense, That I might be a pattern, &c. saith the apostle, 1 Tim. i. 16. and in their after course, as in this context, ver. 12. Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, &c. They must be leaders in the whole way of salvation, from first to last.

8. Pride in the ministers of the Gospel, and in them that live under a Gospel ministry, is a most monstrous absurdity: for what are we, all of us, but a company of wretched creatures, just perishing, and only (at the best) but in the way of being saved! What have such to be proud of?

9. Both Christ's ministers, and their flocks, are under the greatest obligation imaginable unto union. For their case is one and the same, their miseries were the same, their dangers the same. They must all have the same Saviour, the same way of salvation, and the same end; the same state of salvation, which all the nations of the saved are to be brought to at last, Rev. xxi. 24.

10. 'Tis an unquestionable thing, that salvation is to be designed for by all sorts. Ministers must aim to save

themselves and their hearers. And is the minister to design his people's salvation, and not they their own? They have mean thoughts of salvation that stumble here, as if they were only to be saved from hell-flames! But to be saved from sin that makes us unlike God! to have his image and his love perfected in us, to be with the rest of the elect partakers of salvation, with eternal glory, is that mean? 2 Tim. ii. 10.

11. The ministers of the Gospel must, some time or other, be taken away from their work. It is time, a limited duration, within which their work and business lie, for the saving themselves and those that hear them. They are to save themselves. This end they are to pursue; and it must some time be attained. They are not always to labour, and never rest: some time they are to receive the fruit of this their labour, and the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls. As more time passes, their salvation draws nearer than when they believed; they are not always to be in saving, and never saved. In mercy to them, God will translate them; and may it not be in judgment to many, whom they earnestly laboured to save, but who rejected their counsels, and strove against their own salvation! That they may not always labour in vain for themselves, and because they have laboured in vain for many others, they must be withdrawn from their hard and toilsome labour, and enter into rest.

12. The loss is great, and grievous beyond all expression, above all our lamentation, when such are taken away as have made it their business to save themselves and those that heard them. In their endeavour to save themselves they have been great examples. In their endeavour to save others, they may have been great instruments of much saving good to many a soul. How few are they that drive such designs! How fast doth their number decrease! How fitly may we take up that of the Psalmist, when the godly man ceases, and the faithful fail from among the children of men! And what could be said with greater pathos, Psal. xii. 1. Help, Lord, as in a common ruin: Help, help, for God's sake, help, Lord, help! My friends you are not sensible you have lost such a one, even while you are not yet saved! while you yet need to be working out your salvation! The effectually called, 'tis true, are saved, 2 Tim. i. 9. Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling.—And (which is in substance the same thing) the regenerate are saved: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 5. But if this were the case of you all, how much yet remains to be done, in order to your full and consummate salvation! You have yet mighty difficulties to overcome; a body of death, which you are not yet delivered from. For are not these some of your groans, in reference to it, O who shall deliver us? A world full of troubles and snares; your adversary the devil, that goes about seeking whom he may devour; all the principalities and powers of the kingdom of darkness, that you are to contend with, and with whom you are to dispute every step of your way to heaven. And do you not need such a leader in that way? And if any are fallen into drowsy slumbers, do you not need his awakening ministry? If dead, how often hath the blessed Spirit breathed life into you, by his quickening ministry! How often hath God used him to enlighten you, when you have been in the dark; to clear up the great doctrines of the Gospel, when you have not distinctly understood them; to establish you in the faith, when you have wavered; to resolve you in matters of practice, when you have been in doubt; to encourage you in your fears and faintings, to comfort you in your sadness and sorrows! I wonder not that there are many weeping eyes, and should much wonder if there be not many aching, trembling hearts among you, for what you have lost, and from an apprehension how hard and almost hopeless it is, your loss should be soon or equally supplied.

He was long in preparing and forming to be what he was, when you lost him. His station among you in this neighbourhood, when first he undertook the pastoral charge of this church, over which the Holy Ghost made him overseer, required a man of as much wisdom and grace as any such station could well be supposed to do; considering how numerous, how intelligent, and well instructed a people, he was to take the care of. I well remember, that about three or four and forty years ago, being desired to give some help, on a Lord's day, to that eminent servant of Christ Mr. Greenhill, whose praise is still in all the churches, I then first heard him preach: and (if my memory fail not) he had about that time in hand some part of that excellent discourse of the Almost Christian: I had then the opportunity of beginning an acquaintance with him. His excellent good natural parts, his ingenuous education, his industry, his early labours in preaching the Gospel of Christ in his native country, in the city, and in this place; his conjunction and society, for some years, with that excellent servant of God before named; above all, the gracious assistances he had from heaven; gave him great advantages to be a minister of Christ, approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. And his multiplied years, unto the seventieth, with the continual addition thereby to the rich treasury of his experiences, still improved him more and more: so that there being no decay of his natural endowments, and a continual increase of his supernatural, you had the best of him at last: whereby indeed, your loss was the greater, but your obligation was also the greater, that God continued to you the enjoyment of him so long; and that in a serviceable state. But when he could be no longer serviceable in his stated, delightful work, it was by the decay not of the inward, but the outward man; so that when he could preach to you and converse with you no longer, he could earnestly and fervently pray for you to the end. And God did not afflict you, by leaving long among you only the shadow, the outside of the man, and of such a man!

He took little pleasure in embroiling himself or his hearers in needless and fruitless controversies. The great, substantial doctrines of the Gospel, were his principal study and delight; such as lay nearest the vitals, and the very heart of religion and godliness; and most directly tending to the saving them that heard him. The subjects which he chose to insist upon, from time to time, in the course of his ministry, showed as to this, his spirit and design. Having formed from the Holy Scriptures that scheme of thoughts which satisfied him, and gave him a clear ground, whereupon to preach the Gospel with an unrecoiling heart, he loved not to discompose it. His judgment in things which had that reference, being constantly moderate, and unexceptionably sound; remote from rigorous and indefensible extremities, on the one hand and the other. Hereupon he drove at his mark without diversion; not so much aiming to proselyte souls to a party as to Christ. And to engage men, as much as in him lay, to be sound and thorough Christians. Hitherto tended his sermons from year to year. The great subject he had in hand, and which he left unfinished, when God took him off from his public work, was manifestly pointed this way; *viz.* of the covenant of God in Christ. And his annual course of preaching a sermon on May day, to young men, had the same manifest scope and aim, with which his public labours were concluded. God so ordering it, that his last sermon was this year on that day.

His judgment in reference to matters of church order, was for union and communion of all visible Christians, *viz.* of such as did visibly hold the head, as to the principal *credenda* and *agenda* of Christianity, the great things belonging to the faith and practice of a Christian; so as nothing be made necessary to Christian communion but what Christ hath made necessary; or what is indeed necessary to one's being a Christian. What he publicly assayed to this purpose the world knows: and many more private endeavours and strugglings of his for such a union, I have not been unacquainted with: the unsuccessfulness of which endeavours, he said, not long before his last confinement, he thought would break his heart. He having openly, among divers persons, and with great earnestness, some time before expressed his consent to some proposals, which if the parties concerned had agreed in the desire of the thing itself, must unavoidably have inferred such a union, without prejudice to their principles; and on such terms, as must have extended it much further; else it had signified little. But this must be effected, as is too apparent, not by mere human endeavour, but by an Almighty

Spirit poured forth, which (after we have suffered awhile) shall καταρτίσαι, put us into joint, and make every joint know its place in the body, (1 Pet. v. 10.) shall conquer private interests and inclinations, and over-awe men's hearts by the authority of the divine law; which now, how express soever it is, little availeth, against such prepossessions. Till then Christianity will be (among us) a languishing, withering thing. When the season comes of such an effusion of the Spirit from on high, there will be no parties. And amidst the wilderness desolation that cannot but be, till that season comes, it matters little, and signifies to me scarce one straw, what party of us is uppermost: the most righteous (as they may be vogued) will be but as briers, and scratching thorns; and it is better to suffer by such, than be of them. In the mean time, it is a mark of God's heavy displeasure, when persons of so healing spirits are taken away. And if it awaken any of us, that will tend to prepare us for the effects of it; which preparation seems a thing more to be hoped than prevention.

But this worthy servant of Christ sees not the woful day, whatever of it he might foresee. His removal makes to many, indeed, a woful day, and that all about him did long foresee. He was long languishing, and even dying daily: but amidst surrounding death, as a relation told me, there was no appearance of any the least cloud upon his spirit, that obscured the evidences of his title to a blessed eternity. Being asked how he did, he said, Going home, as every honest man ought, when his work is done. He was much in admiring God's mercies under his afflicting hand, saying, Every thing on this side hell is mercy: that the mercies he received were greater than his burdens, though in themselves grievous: that he rested upon that promise, that his Father would lay no more upon him than he would enable him to bear: that he expected to be saved only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him. Though he well understood, as I had sufficient reason to know, that Christ's righteousness is never imputed to any, but where, if the subject be capable, there is an inherent righteousness also; that is no cause of our salvation, but the character of the saved. And having before precautioned some as were about him not to be surprised if he went away suddenly, he repeated the ejaculation, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; and renewing the former caution, by saying, Remember what I said before, as he sat in his chair, with all possible composure he bowed his head, and without sigh, or motion, expired in a moment. The sighing part he left to others, that stay behind: and I do even feel the sorrows of his most afflicted family, his mournful widow, his sorrowing sons and daughters, his destitute church; with all others that got good, or might have done, by his quickening, spiritful, piercing ministry; or had the advantage and satisfaction of his acquaintance and converse.

Your grief cannot but be measured by your love; and your love by his in the several kinds and objects of it: his conjugal, paternal, pastoral, friendly love, as he was an affectionate husband, a tender father, a vigilant pastor, and a pleasant friend. But withal, let your consolations be measured by the proper grounds thereof. It is a most improper, irrational, unchristian way of being comforted in such a case, only to let time wear away our sorrows. It is but a negative, a heathenish, yea a worse than heathenish method of receiving comfort. For I have observed it to be animadverted on, as an intolerable absurdity, by some among the heathens, that time should work that cure of grief and sorrow, which reason and prudence work not. And thus 'tis plain we shall be relieved, not by holy thoughts, but by not thinking. So it may in time be forgotten, that ever such a man as Mr. Mead was minister in Stepney! And what is this to Christian consolation?

But we need not wander from the text for a positive and a solid ground of comfort. Remember it was his business to save himself, and those that heard him. As you have no doubt of his salvation, which I believe none of you have, make sure of your own. Put on, with the breastplate of faith and love, that helmet, the hope of salvation. You are of the day, watch and be sober, as those that are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, 1 Thess. v. 7, 8, 9. And then consider (as I doubt not many a soul will bless God for him for ever) how glorious a sight it will be to see him one day appear in the head of a numerous company of saved ones; and say, (as a subordinate parent in the apostle's sense, 1 Cor. iv. 15.) Lord, here am I, and the children thou hast given me.

In conclusion. For you of his dear and beloved flock, this may be directive to you as well as consolatory. Would you have a pastor after God's heart? Put yourselves under the conduct, as much as in you is, of such a pastor as you apprehend will be intent, in all his ministrations, upon this double end, to save himself and them that hear him. And labour to be perfect, be of one mind, and live in peace, so the God of love and peace shall be with you, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. And remember him as one that hath had the rule over you, and hath spoken to you the word of the Lord; and follow the faith of such, considering the end of their conversation; and that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. As you change pastors you will not need to change Christs, so as to have one yesterday, another to-day, and a third to-morrow. Pastors under the Gospel, as well as priests under the law, were many, because of death; but our blessed Lord, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, Heb. vii. 24. Therefore do you never think of another Christ, as their doubt was, (Matt. xi. 3.) but cleave to this your great Lord with purpose of heart, till he give you at last an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom.

Let his mournful relatives, and all of you to whom he was dear, consider what our Lord offered as matter of consolation, in the most trying case of this kind that ever could occur to poor mortals; *i. e.* when he himself was to be taken away from his sorrowing family, and followers. It is but a little while; *q. d.* my words have a plain meaning: a little while, and you shall not see me, and again a little while, and you shall see me; and because I go to my Father. Ye now have sorrow, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your joy no man taketh from you, John xvi. 20.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will: working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

A FUNERAL SERMON

FOR THAT FAITHFUL, LEARNED, AND MOST WORTHY MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,

THE REV. PETER VINK, B. D.

WHO DECEASED SEPTEMBER 6, 1699.

TO THE

TRULY PIOUS MRS. MARY VINK, RELICT OF THE DECEASED.

My dear and honoured Sister,

The relation I stand in to you, by that union which some years since the good providence of God hath brought about between our families, obliges me, besides what I owe you upon the common Christian account, to partake with you in your sorrows, for this late afflicting loss; as I have, according to my measure, in the satisfaction of enjoying so pleasant and delectable a relative and friend. And I would not only bear my own much lighter part of this burden, but (if I knew how) ease and lighten your part. It ought to do much towards it (by helping you to poise and balance your burden) to put you in mind, that you have a greater and nearer relation left. Your Maker is your husband: God all-sufficient, in whom is immense fulness: who can be always present, and most intimately converse with your spirit; who never dies, and to whom your relation is eternal. Which are all, things not agreeable, or possible, to any earthly relative. This God is to be your God for ever and ever, and your guide unto the death; even in this wilderness, on this side death, where we most need a guide. Nor hath your most tender deceased consort otherwise left you alone. He hath left you with an observant son and his yoke-fellow, with a dear and only brother, that, it is to be hoped, will severally be found full of dutiful and brotherly affection towards you. And you have genuine relatives and branches remaining to you, daughter and daughter's children, that through God's goodness may be continuing and growing comforts to you.

And this season of your separation from so pleasant a companion and guide of your life, will be of no long continuance. It should occasion you to intermingle thanksgivings with lamentations, that your union and enjoyment continued so long; and for what remains the time is short. Therefore, they that lose such relations, are to weep as if they wept not—remembering that the fashion of this world passes away. Especially it ought to be considered, that such a sad parting will be recompensed by the most joyful meeting; when they that have slept in Jesus, God will bring with him; and the survivors, at that day, be caught up into the clouds, to meet their Redeemer (and, no doubt, the redeemed) in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord. Therefore let us comfort ourselves and each other with these words; which have a fulness in them richly sufficient for you, and for,

My dear sister,
Your sincerely affectionate, and
very respectful brother,
JOHN HOWE.

ACTS V. 20.

GO, STAND AND SPEAK IN THE TEMPLE TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE.

The present speaker in this text is an angel of God; one of those blessed spirits from among the principalities and powers in heavenly places, who greatly delight, as you have lately heard,[a] and I hope are, God willing, further to hear, to be concerned about the affairs of God's church on earth. So that we depart not much from our former subject in diverting to this. But whereas the speaker was an immortal angel, and the subject spoken of words of life; these, you may think, are things very remote from the design of a funeral discourse: yet you are withal to consider, that the persons spoken unto were mortal men, Peter, with the rest of the apostles, whose lives were in jeopardy every hour. That they are so mentioned in this history, Peter, and the rest of the apostles; and what we find expressly recorded of him besides, that it was endeavoured the diseased might be put under his shadow passing by; and that he afterwards in this chapter is only named, with the addition, the other apostles, making their defence, being convened before the council, (ver. 29.) shows that Peter was more eminently active, vigorous, forward, and zealous in the work of Christ: but far from the affectation of principality over the rest. Quite another consideration may well be understood to have urged him; and which our Lord seems to refer to, when he said, Go, tell my disciples, and Peter. But he, with the rest, we are sure, were all mortals alike. And they were also, from time to time,

a Having a discourse in hand about this time, on Eph. iii. 10. To the intent that now unto the principalities, &c.

assemblies of mortals that they were directed to speak unto the words of life.

And, my friends, the very name of life cannot but have a grateful pleasant sound to them that dwell in the midst of deaths; to them that find the dark and dismal shadow of death continually spread over the whole region which they inhabit. When they find that death, in all its more gloomy appearances, hath so general a power over ministers and people, preachers and them that were to be preached unto; how pleasant is the mention of life, and such a life, as surmounts, as exceeds the sphere where any death can come; a sphere by itself all full of vitality, and in which death, or any shadow of death, can never find place! To be told of such a life, amidst surrounding deaths, cannot but be a pleasant and grateful thing to them that have sense enough, in reference to their present case, and any faith in reference to the future. Indeed the power of death appears so much the more absolute, and its commission is seen to be of so much the greater amplitude and extensiveness, that it equally reaches to preachers and hearers; must equally reach such men, as these apostles were, and all the people they were to speak to the words of this life. But so much the higher and more glorious are the triumphs of that life, the words whereof are here mentioned. For 'tis evident these words do mean and intend a life, into which every thing of death and mortality is to be swallowed up. And therefore though death do stop the breath of preachers, and the ears of hearers, it can never prevail against that word in which this life is wont to breathe. For though all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth and the flower hereof falleth away; yet the word of the Lord endureth for ever, that word which by the Gospel is preached unto us, 1 Pet. i. 24, 25.

This indeed was an ancient and very eminent minister of the word of life, whose decease and death occasions this solemnity, and this discourse, now at this time. And it ought to please us so much the more, that while we are now to consider and lament the death of such a preacher, the word he was wont to preach shall never die. And that we are to consider at the same time, the life which such words do both concern and cause, is finally victorious over death in all the kinds and forms of it; a life hid with Christ in God; whereof he is the root and original, who avowed himself to be the resurrection and the life; and hath assured the partakers of this life, (whether preachers or hearers,) that when he who is their life shall appear, they shall also appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 3, 4. But so vain were the opposers of the preaching the words of this life, the obdurate, infidel Jews, that they thought to shut it up, and the preachers of it, within the walls of a prison; for that was the case here. A sort of men full of malignity and bitterness, especially as you read in the context, those of the sect of the Sadducees, who were the prevailing party at that time in their Sanhedrim, who believed nothing of a life to come, and had drawn in the high priest to be on their side; and who, as we read in the foregoing chap. ver. 1, 2. with the high priest, were grieved (pained as the word signifies) that they (*viz.* Peter and John, though the former was orator) preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead. These are (as they were before) the active, industrious instruments to restrain the preachers, and suppress the preaching the words of this life: they, as is said above, filled with indignation, laid hands on the apostles, threw them into the common prison, and there they think them and their word securely enclosed, and shut up together, that the world should never hear more of them. And did ever malice more befool itself! Could spite ever act or attempt a part more ridiculously absurd! Did they think to imprison celestial light! to bury immortal life! Heaven derides their attempt, and exposes them to be derided. For as we are next told, the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, (why made they not him their prisoner too?) and brought them forth, and said as follows in the text, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. These two things are here very plain,

First, That by this life is meant a peculiar sort of life; this life, ταυτης της ζωης, *this same life*, that was so highly predicated, and cried up at that time, so that no one could be in doubt what kind of life it was. It is true, out of those circumstances, when we use the phrase of this life, we ordinarily refer to the common affairs of this present life. But that it cannot be so understood here is most evident: the whole business under present consideration had quite another reference. The apostles had no controversy with the rulers of the Jews, about the affairs of this world, or of the best way of living a few days on earth; but what was the surest way of living for ever; and whether believing on Christ as the Messiah, he that was to come, were not that way. Their only contest with the people was (as his own was, while he was yet among them) that they would not come to him that they might have life. So here the angel of the Lord commanding these servants and apostles of his to preach the words of this life, using the demonstrative term ταυτης, this same life, this way of living, or obtaining life, now so much disputed, and which began to make so great a noise in the world; cried up by some, decried by others: this sufficiently distinguished it. There were more obscure notices of it before, but now it was more clearly revealed, and more loudly to be spoken out. The manner of expression signifies it to be a peculiar and more excellent sort of life, very diverse from, and far transcending, what is common to men; nor leaves us in any doubt of the angel's meaning.

Secondly, That the words of this life must necessarily mean the Gospel, *viz.* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whereof these were the ministers and apostles, bound by special office to diffuse to their uttermost this life and the words of it. Whence, therefore, for our own instruction, we may take up this two-fold observation:—I. That the Gospel contains, or is composed and made up of, words of a peculiar, and most excellent, and noble kind of life.—II. That it is the part of the ministers of this Gospel, even by angelical suffrage and determination, as they have opportunity, to publish such words, *i. e.* to preach this Gospel. In speaking to these two conjunctly, I shall particularly insist on these four heads, *viz.*

1. To show how peculiar and how excellent a sort of life this is.

2. To show you how usually and fitly the Gospel is so paraphrased, by the word or words of life, and of such a life.

3. To show you, that it cannot but be the part of the ministers of this Gospel, to preach the words of this life.

4. We shall also take the incidental occasion of observing to you, and insisting briefly on it, that they have the very suffrage of the angels of God to that purpose, that it is their part and business to preach the words of this life. And so shall make use of all.

1. We are to show the peculiar excellency of this life. That it is a peculiar sort of life, we have already noted from the angel's speaking so distinctively of it, calling it this life, this same life, that is now every where so much spoken of; that is the matter of present discourse, and of inquiry at this time. And that it is a most excellent, a most noble kind of life, the expression itself also doth not obscurely point out to us. That it is called *this life*, κατ' εξοχην, life in the highest and most eminent sense. Never talk of this shadow, this dream of life, we are now passing through, but speak to the people the words of this life; this is a life worth speaking of. And the excellencies of it will appear in these several respects; as,

(1.) That it is most manifestly divine life; and not at the common rate, as all life is from God; but as it not only proceeds from God, but resembles him, bears his peculiar impress upon it; upon which account it is called the life of God, the divine life, in Eph. iv. 18. where the apostle, lamenting the sad and dismal state of the Gentile world, saith, that they were alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, and the blindness of their hearts. It is, in a very special sense, a God-breathed life; not as the natural life and soul of man were breathed at first from God; but as there was a peculiar divinity in this life, not only as coming from him, but as having in it a chosen dependence on him, and tendency towards him, by its own very essence, which the life of the soul of man, at first, had not. For if a voluntary dependence on God, and tendency towards him, had been essential to the natural life of a man's soul, it had been

impossible they should ever have been lost. Such a posture God-ward was agreeable, and connatural, not essential. But it now is proper and peculiar to this life; though still not essential, as it never was, but more deeply fixed in the soul by grace, than it was at first by nature, to tend to God, as it is by faith derived from him, as is expressed, Hab. ii. 4. Heb. x. 38. The just shall live by faith; and Rom. vi. 11. Alive to God; as by love it works towards him, Gal. v. 6. and Gal. ii. 19. I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. The soul was never otherwise dead, than it was dead towards God; and now, while in the present sense it lives, it lives by and to him. It being the steady, habitual determination of the soul God-ward, as its first and last, both in itself, and in the design of its implantation. And so is the imprinted image of the life of God himself, so far as the condition of a creature can admit, *i.e.* that as God lives of and to himself, the soul, by this life, lives not in a merely natural, (which is common to all creatures,) but in an apprehended and designed dependence on God, and subordination to him.

(2.) It is a Christian, as well as a divine life; a life that comes from God, not as Creator only, as all life, and as the life of our soul particularly at first did, with its very being, which involves life in itself; but a life that comes from Christ, as our Redeemer, as God-man, and Mediator betwixt God and man, whereof he is the immediate Author, and which he procured by his own death, and by his resurrection from the dead, wherein we partake with him, when we live this life. I am crucified with Christ, saith the apostle, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, Gal. ii. 20. To me to live is Christ, Phil. i. 21. He is the Author and Fountain, as well as the end of this life. 'Tis a life owing to the Redeemer dying, 1 Pet. ii. 24. He bare our sins, that we might live to righteousness. And we are taught, upon his dying, mentioned before, (Rom. vi. 11.) to reckon ourselves dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And he is therefore said to be the immediate Donor of this life, John iv. 14. And I am come, saith he, that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly, John x. 10. The beginning, and improvements of this life to perfect plenitude, are all from him; and 'tis therefore said to be a life hid with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. He is said to be their life, *v.* 4. by all which Christ is signified to be the Author and Giver of this life. And he is as expressly said to be the end of it. His love in dying for us, constraining us no more to live to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again. To which purpose are the words, Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9. Again,

(3.) It is a pure and holy life, such as, wheresoever it is, cannot suffer a man's soul customarily to mingle with the impurities and pollutions of this world. It is a life that carries up the soul into a purer region, where it draws purer breath. If you live in the Spirit, walk also in the Spirit, Gal. v. 25.

(4.) It is an active, a laborious, and fruitful life. They that live this life, live it by union with Christ; and they that are united with him, abiding in him, bring forth much fruit, John xv. 5. when without him they could do nothing, as it there follows. They that live this life come thereupon, their love abounding more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, or spiritual sense, (as the word αἰσθησις there used may most fitly be rendered,) discerning the things that differ, or approving or preferring the things that are more excellent, to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God, Phil. i. 9, 10, 11. This is the tendency of this life. It is a principle, in those in whom it is, tending to usefulness, and common good; and in order thereto, to growth and self-improvement. Again,

(5.) It is a most generous sort of life, that disdains mean things; cannot feed upon earth and ashes. Such communications it must have, as are suitable to the life of a man's spirit. Herein stands the life of the spirit, in receiving and drawing in communications from God. They that live this life, do hunger and thirst after righteousness, that they may be filled, Matt. v. 6. They seek honour, and glory, and immortality, that they may finally attain eternal life, Rom. ii. 7. This is a noble sort of life, that cannot be maintained, as it was not attained, by common means; that cannot live upon low, mean, and base things. They that are of the earth can live upon things that spring from the earth; but heaven-born ones must be continually maintained by heavenly communications, beams of light accompanied with vigorous influence that descend from thence.

(6.) It is a devoted life, sacred to God in Christ Jesus, I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live to God, Gal. ii. 19. For as in the principle, 'tis an habitual determination of the soul towards God, through Christ; so, in the exercise, it is a continual, or often repeated, self-devoting or dedicating of ourselves accordingly. A yielding ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, Rom. vi. 13. And so Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself: for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord, be Owner, and so Ruler, both of dead and living. Then to whom should we live, but to him?

(7.) It is finally immortal, eternal life. It is so in its tendency, and it is so in its complete and perfect issue, in its mature state, eternal life, such in the plenitude thereof every thing of mortality is to be swallowed up, 2 Cor. v. 4. This is that which the aspirations and groans of renewed souls aim at, not barely to be unclothed, that were a mean thing, only to lay down this flesh that thereby we may escape the troubles, that, being in it, we are exposed to; that would go but a little way; but to be clothed upon with the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, furnished and enriched with all the delights and glories of the Divine presence. Therefore our Saviour says of this life, they that have the beginnings of it, They that drink of this water, it shall be in them a well of water springing up into life eternal, John iv. 14. The spiritual life that renewed souls now live, will be eternal life. They differ not in kind; but the one will grow up into the other. Therefore saith our Saviour, I give my sheep eternal life. John x. 28. I shall never have done giving, till I have improved the life I have given to eternal life, in which there will be no ebbings and flowings; but where life shall be perfectly pure, and in its full, mature state, without any mixture of death, or deadliness. As any thing is said to be pure, that is full of itself, without the mixture of the least thing that is alien or disagreeable thereto. Every thing of mortality shall be swallowed up in this life.

2. We are to note to you, according to the order proposed, the frequency and aptitude of this paraphrase of the Gospel, (words of life,) or of what is equivalent thereto. For that the Gospel is meant by it, is out of question. It is all one as if the angel had said, Go, preach the Gospel. That some such phrase is usual to signify the Gospel they can well tell, that are not strangers to the Bible. Sometimes this phrase is used to this purpose in the singular number, as Phil. ii. 16. Holding forth the word of life. Sometimes in the plural, as in the 6th of John's Gospel, ver. 68. Thou hast the words of eternal life. And sometimes instead of life is put salvation, which is the same thing. To be saved and to live this life is all one, whether you consider salvation begun, or salvation consummate: salvation begun, is but this life begun, He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, 2 Tim. i. 9. When he regenerates any, he is said to save them. He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Titus iii. 5. And that complete, consummate salvation, should be signified by this life consummate and complete, is obvious and familiar, the phrases salvation and eternal life being so promiscuously used in Scripture to signify the same thing, that many places, need not be quoted; Acts xiii. 26. To you is the word of this salvation sent; Eph. i. 13. The word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation. And not perishing, or being saved, is expounded by having eternal, or everlasting life, John iii. 15, 16, 17. And for the aptness of it, or that the words that compose and make up the Gospel, are fitly called the words of life, will appear upon several accounts: as,

(1.) Inasmuch as this word is the means of begetting this life, James i. 18. Of his own will begat he us, with

the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. In regeneration is infused the first principle of this life. And our Saviour prays for his disciples, John xvii. 17. Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth. And sanctification, in the rise and beginning of it, is nothing else but regeneration.

(2.) Inasmuch as this word improves this life, or is the means of improving it, and carrying it on towards its perfect state, 1 Pet. ii. 2. As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. It is the means of our spiritual growth.

(3.) Inasmuch as this word carries in it the promise of this life in the most perfect state of it. 1 John ii. 25. This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. Chap. v. 11, 12. This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life. This is a recorded thing, and is the final and terminative promise of the Gospel. All the promises of it run into this.

(4.) The Gospel is the rule of that judgment, by which all that shall partake therein are finally adjudged to eternal life, to this life in perfection, Matt. xxv. 46. Those that are absolved by our Lord Jesus Christ from the condemning sentence, and have the saving sentence past upon them, of them it is said, They, *viz.* the righteous, go into life eternal, just immediately from the tribunal of their judge; which sentence, and judgment, is according to this Gospel. God will judge the secrets of all hearts, according to my Gospel. Wherever that impress is to be found, Gospel righteousness, it distinguishes them that belong to Christ, and marks them out for eternal life. These things fall under the former observation; the other two, which are to succeed, belong to the latter.

3. That it is the part of the ministers of the Gospel, as they can have opportunity, to preach the words of this life. For the making out of this, I shall speak to these two things:—(1.) To show, that it ought to be their design, and end, to help souls into this state of life:—(2.) That they ought to preach the Gospel, or the words of this life, in order hereunto.—That ought to be their end; and this their work, in order to this end.

(1.) It ought to be their end, to help souls into this state of life. For,

[1.] It is the end of their office, therefore it ought to be their end. It would be unaccountable, that they should design a diverse end from the proper end of their office, or that they should not design that. Now the Gospel is, by its designation, to be the ministration of spirit and life unto souls, 2 Cor. iii. 6.

[2.] They ought to design the bringing of souls to Christ, to get them into Christ, who is the Fountain of this life. You will not come to me, that you might have life, saith our Saviour, John v. 40. And sure it is the business, and ought to be the design, of the ministers of the Gospel, as much as in them is, to bring souls to Christ, and to counterwork the disinclination that is in men thereto. You will not come: but we will do all that in us lies to persuade you to come, and to come for this end, that you may live.

[3.] It undoubtedly ought to be their end, to have souls under their ministry regenerated and born again. This they ought to design, and this is the very beginning of that state of life; and they are therefore entitled fathers, in reference to this their great design and business. If you have had ten thousand instructers, yet you have not had many fathers; for I have begotten you to Christ, saith the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 15. You were regenerated by my ministry. And this ought to be every minister's design, that souls be regenerated by their ministry. So the same apostle speaks of that servant of Philemon's, and his own son, Onesimus; I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Phil. 10.

[4.] They ought to design the perfecting of souls unto eternal life. For this end was the ministry given, in all the degrees and kinds of it; *viz.* for the perfecting of the body of Christ, as you find, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. And he gave some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And then is this new man perfect, when this new life is mature in him, and grown up to its fulness.

(2.) As that ought to be their end, so this ought to be their work, in order to that end, to preach this word of life, as they can have opportunity. This will appear several ways; as,

[1.] They are commanded so to do. Christ commands it, Go teach all nations, &c. Matt. xxviii. 19. His apostle gives it in charge, even before God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season, 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. And in the former epistle, having before given the same charge, to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, 1 Tim. iv. 13. He afterwards, in reference to this, and many other precepts, urges his charge before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, adding, and the elect angels, to observe these things, &c. And here there is a command from God by an angel, Go, and speak to the people in the temple, the words of this life. The obligation by this precept, given the apostles with circumstances, lies in substance upon all that are ministers of the Gospel of Christ.

[2.] They are directed how to do it, as well as commanded to do it. The great God instructs his prophet Ezekiel, say to them, As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Words are put into his servants' mouths, even these words of life.

[3.] They are threatened if they neglect to do it; as in the 8th verse of that 33d of Ezekiel, If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

[4.] There are encouraging promises of great reward, (though that reward is all of grace,) to them that succeed in this work. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as stars, Dan. xii. 3.

[5.] They have special assistance, according as they depend and seek it from the blessed God, in this work. He abets them in it. Hereupon they strive according to his power that works in them mightily, Col. i. ult. Though all have not assistance equally, yet all have what is suitable to the pleasure of the free Donor, when they faithfully engage and persist in this blessed and glorious work.

[6.] They are assured of acceptance in it, though they succeed not. So pleasing is this work to the blessed God, the endeavouring to bring souls into this state of life; Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, Isa. xlix. 5. This, indeed, is spoken principally of Christ himself; but subordinately of all that serve him in this work. So saith the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. We are unto God a sweet savour (or odour rather, as the word ὀσμὴ more properly signifies) of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the odour of death unto death; to the other the odour of life unto life. And this lay with a mighty weight upon his spirit. O that ever we should be the savour of death unto death to any! Who is sufficient for these things! But whether of life or death, we are a sweet odour to God in Christ, as to both; when he sees the sincerity of our hearts, and how fain we would fetch souls out of the state of death into this life. So grateful and pleasant to him is the work effected of saving souls, that the attempt and desire of it is not ungrateful.

4. We are further to show, that this is the part of the ministers of the Gospel, to preach the words of this life, even by angelical suffrage and declaration. We have the concurrence in one, of that whole most excellent order; for among them can be no disagreeing votes or sentiments, to put us out of all doubt that this is our business. And that is a great additional enforcement of it upon us. But here it is requisite to do these two things:—(1.) To show how far only the angels can be concerned in a matter of this nature; and—(2.) That though they are concerned not further, yet we have here sufficient evidence of their suffrage, and complacential approbation.

(1.) How far only they can be concerned in matters of this nature.

[1.] Not so far as to do this work themselves. They are not to be the preachers of the Gospel; God did not think that fit. If that had been the known and stated course, the apostles might have replied, upon their being sent to preach this Gospel: You that are an immortal angel, whom no violence can touch or hurt, go you and preach this Gospel. No, they were to do no such work; by the counsel of heaven this work is committed to men. In that marvellous conversion of the apostle Paul in his way to Damascus, he is sent to Ananias in the city, to be told by him what he was to do, Acts ix. 6. And when there was that special regard had to Cornelius's prayers and alms, that God was resolved he should not want the express discovery of the Gospel of Christ; he sends an angel to him, not to instruct him himself; but to direct him to send for Peter, as you find, Acts x. and the following chapter, who was to speak to him words, by which he and his house were to be saved, as appears by comparing those two chapters together. So that they are not to do this work themselves. Nor,

[2.] Are they so far concerned, as to confer the office. The office of a preacher doth not come from an angel. When the angel saith this to these apostles, they were apostles and ministers of Christ before, he doth not make them such; nor is that God's way of conveying the office. No, it comes from Christ himself originally; he gave the first commission, Go, and teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. So that the same office comes from Christ, to the end of the world. Though the persons that first received the commission were to continue but their own short time; yet the commission is continued to such as should, in several ages, succeed them, and still from Christ; but by other appointed means, which he hath settled, and which remain stated in his church: those that are in that office of preachers or ministers themselves, conveying it to others, who shall, according to fixed Gospel rules, be found qualified for it. But the business of angels, wherein God hath been pleased to employ them, in reference to these affairs of the church, is only sometimes to determine circumstances, as the angel here to these apostles; now is the time, Go forthwith to the temple, and preach to the people the words of this life. The obligation to the thing did not come from the angel, but the determination of the season, and place, for that time. So we find as to other circumstances. The apostle Paul is directed by an angel appearing in the likeness of a man of Macedonia, to go and preach to the Macedonians, saying to him, Come over, and help us, Acts xvi. 9. Thus God does when he thinks fit; but we are not warranted to expect the signification of his mind this way; he having appointed other means that are sufficient. But yet,

(2.) Notwithstanding that angels are concerned no further than you have heard; yet that they may be concerned, and have been concerned so far, is an evidence of their complacential approbation of the thing. And this will appear partly by the consideration of the nature and temper of those excellent creatures; and partly, by the consideration of several concurrent things, of which the Holy Scripture gives us notice.

[1.] Consider their very nature, unto whom their sanctity and their benignity is this very nature, in this their confirmed state. We are not to think that this angel, this messenger sent from God, conveyed his message, as if it passed through a dead trunk, that could be no way affected therewith; but as one highly savouring his message, taking great complacency in it. It was pleasant to him in the delivery, thus to direct these apostles of our Lord, Go to the temple, preach to the people the words of this life; your immediate call is from the prison to the temple, to teach the people how they may be set at liberty from the bonds of death, worse bonds than yours. So much we may collect from their habitual sanctity and devotedness to God, the dutiful, ready compliance, and conformity of their will to the good and acceptable will of their Maker and Lord, and the peculiar benignity of their nature that they were glad to be thus employed; it was welcome work to any one of them that carried this message.

[2.] Several other things concur, mentioned in the Holy Scripture, to make us apprehend their complacential approbation of so grateful an errand, as,

1. The solemn jubilee that they held upon our Lord's descent into this world upon this saving design. Then an innumerable multitude of the heavenly host are brought in triumphing together, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men, Luke ii. 14. This appears to have been their common sense, and so, no doubt, was the sense of this angel at this time. They all celebrate the descent of our Lord, upon this saving design coming down into this world, to be the light of men, as it is expressed, John i. 4. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. A luminous life it was, that he came to bless this world with. And when the angels did celebrate this descent of his, with so much joy and jubilation, it was in pursuance of a proclamation that had before passed through all the spacious heavens, when he brought his first-begotten Son into the world, it was said, And let all the angels of God worship him, Heb. i. 6. They were all to adore the Redeemer, as such, because he vouchsafed to be a Redeemer to such as we were, buried and lost in death.

2. Consider the ordinary stated course of their ministration; what that is, and whither it tends, you find expressed, Heb. i. 14. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Heirs of salvation, and heirs of eternal life, are the same, as hath been noted before. This they in their stated course pursue; this is the design of their ministry, to be helpful to those who are to be the heirs of salvation.

3. We may collect it from the joy that they express for the success of the Gospel of this kind. Where they observe it to succeed, if in the conversion but of one sinner, Luke xv. 10. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, if but one sinner repenteth. The heavens are hereupon filled with joy, the angels rejoice that one is now added to their happy number gained from under the power of death, and Satan, the great destroyer of souls.

4. The prospect they have, that all that partake of this life, here in the beginnings of it, shall partake with them in the eternal life and blessedness of the future state. All that are here converted, and regenerated, they are by degrees coming to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 22, 23. All this is plain evidence that there is a complacential concurrence and suffrage of angels to the ministers of Christ, doing their work, preaching the words of this life, according as they have opportunity.

The use of this you may easily apprehend might be vastly copious, but we must be within necessary limits.

1. We may learn hence, that such as the Gospel is, such ought our attendance to it to be. There ought to be a correspondence between what the Gospel in itself is, and our manner of attending the dispensation of it. Doth it consist of words of life? then so ought it to be attended to, as containing the words of life, the words of this life, this noble and most excellent sort of life. Methinks this should strike the consciences of some: I wonder if it do not of any! How few do attend the dispensation of this Gospel, as apprehending it to contain the words of such a life! In what agonies of spirit should we attend upon the dispensation of this Gospel, if we understood the matter so! They are the words of the most excellent kind of life that we hear, when we hear the Gospel of Christ truly preached. This ought to carry a sting and pungency with it to the hearts of such as, upon inquiry, (when did I attend upon the Gospel, as containing the words of life?) cannot give to their own hearts and consciences any satisfying account. Let the inquiry proceed further, Have I got life by it? Did it ever enter into my heart, as the word of life? Did I ever so much as design, expect, or wish that it should? What shall be said to such, that if they answer truly, must give it against themselves?

2. We may learn hence, that when God is pleased to put such a dignity upon poor mean men, as to speak to men by them, and about so great concerns, the affairs of this life; things so high and sublime as the words of this life import; we ought hereupon both to acknowledge God's wisdom and compassion towards us; and be sensible

of our obligation highly to esteem them for their work's sake.

(1.) We ought to acknowledge the wisdom and compassion of God, that he hath chosen this way to treat with men; that he doth not always, as he did once, speak to the Israelites, by thunder and lightning, and a terrible tempest, and a voice of words, which voice they that heard, entreated they might never hear it any more; and thereupon desired Moses that he would speak to them from God, for they could not hear such a voice, but they must die for it. No, God speaks to men by men like themselves, who have the same nature and the same interest, that are to be upon the same bottom with them, and preach the same Gospel of salvation, by which they are to be saved themselves. And,

(2.) We are to honour such, as he puts this honour upon, for their work's sake; to esteem them highly in love on this account, 1 Thess. v. 13. How beautiful are the feet of them, that bring glad tidings! Rom. x. 15. How welcome their approaching steps! How graceful is their motion towards us! They that labour in the word and doctrine, are upon that account worthy of double honour, 1 Tim. v. 17. And all this not for their own sake, but for their work's sake. For the greatest instruments that ever were in the world, employed in this work, what are they? That great apostle Paul counts himself as nothing; though not behind the chiefest apostles, yet a mere nothing; so he nullifies himself, diminishes himself to a thing of nought, a perfect nullity. Elsewhere, I laboured more abundantly than they all, saith he, yet not I! 1 Cor. xv. 10. Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 1 Cor. iii. 5. Who is Paul? As if he would say, it cannot be told; too little a thing to be seen or known! or that any notice should be taken of him. We cannot, indeed, have too mean thoughts of ourselves; so little we are, compared with the greatness of our work: and none can have so mean thoughts of us, as we ought to have of ourselves, who should know ourselves best, and better understand our own little value, than any others can. But when any esteem the ministers of Christ for their work's sake, they only express a respect to him that sends them, to the message they bring, and to their own souls, that are in such a way so tenderly cared for.

3. We may learn hence, how peculiarly spiritual and intellectual this life is, which such words do so nearly concern. Do you know any life besides, that is produced by words, and by words maintained and improved? No words can otherwise affect us, than as they convey a sense into our minds so as to be understood, and into our hearts and spirits, being inwardly received and believed there. This must be an intellectual and most pure sort of life, that depends upon words, that can be begotten by words, and improved by words, and perfected by words. It shows it to be a sort of life far above the sphere of this bodily life; this bodily life is not to be begotten or maintained by words. You cannot by words recover life into a dead finger, much less into a dead corpse. And again, what admirable words are those that can make us live! transmit life into the very centre, and make our hearts live! It is true, it is not the mere words, but divine breath animating those words, that begets this life: but that still proves it to be a spiritual life. The divine word hath a peculiarity with it: that, indeed, through the efficacy of a divine blessing accompanying it, makes the ordinary means available, for the sustaining of our natural life; man lives not by bread only, but by the word that proceeds our of God's mouth; much more is his vital word necessary to the production and maintenance of the life of our souls.

4. Hence we may collect how dismal and sad their case is, that sit from time to time with dead souls under the words of life! Year after year there are words of life spoken and breathed forth, in those assemblies where they are hearers; yet when the truth of the matter comes to be told, must say, I feel nothing of this life in my soul; my heart is dead still, is still a stone or a clod! No words that I have heard, have awakened, quickened, melted, purified my heart, warmed and inflamed my heart! Dead I was in trespasses and sins, and so I remain notwithstanding all the words of this life which I have heard! This is a dismal case; when it was God's chosen way to make his word the ministration of spirit and life to souls, if it do not breathe in these words, wherein can it be expected to breathe?

5. We may collect hence, that if, by angelical suffrage, it ought to be the business of ministers to preach the words of this life; then, undoubtedly, by angelical suffrage, the words of this life are words worth the hearing; worth attending and listening to. An angel would have been loth to have been the messenger to these great worthies, the apostles of our Lord, charging them to go and preach in the temple to the people a jargon of impertinent, idle stories. No; but when he saith, Go, and preach to the people the words of this life, that leaves the matter out of all doubt, that here was a ready concurrence both in judgment and complacence of the angel hereto; and that in full effect, he pronounced these things worth listening to. Though we cannot suppose him so assuming, as to think he could by his approbation add any thing real to his authority who sent him; yet as to the reputation of the message, with us, it is not without its weight: as it makes a great difference, whether a prince signify his mind, in this or that affair, by a person of honour, or by a foot-boy. Therefore when any of you have heard the words of this life, with neglect and disregard, you have set your judgment against the judgment, at once, of the great God, and of the glorious angels of God: it signifies as if you thought yourselves wiser than God, and than any angel in heaven. They esteem these words worthy the most serious attention and regard; but you look upon them as trifles, not worth the regarding. Worms of this earth, mushrooms lately sprung up, mean abjects, but beginning to crawl, set their mouth and heart against heaven; oppose their rash, presumptuous judgments to the judgment of the supreme Lord, and of those wise sages, the blessed and holy angels, that stand always in the presence of God, and hear his wisdom! The vanities of this world are thought worth the regarding; but the words of eternal life are counted unworthy to be regarded, or listened to! What absurd insolence is this? to persist in a practical judgment, so directly contrary to the judgment of the wise and holy angels; and, as is evident, of God himself, who sent this message! When such men do meet, is not all their talk vanity? running upon the things only of the earth and time, mere impertinency at best to such as have souls to save! But also are not bold, profane jests, about things most sacred, usual ingredients in their conversation? *viz.* what is most opposite to such a design! These things, they reckon, sound well in a coffee-house, or a tavern; but how do they sound in heavenly places, whither the report presently flies up, as may be collected from Eph. iii. 10. To the principalities and powers in the heavenly places is made known by the church (*i. e.* in or about the affairs of the church) the manifold wisdom of God. Which cannot but imply their animadversion upon the follies of men, counterworking that wisdom. Nor can the censure of so excellent creatures, and of so bright understandings, be lightly esteemed by any, but most stupid minds. And if such an addition signify nothing, why doth the apostle, having given a charge before God, and before Jesus Christ, add, and before the elect angels?

6. Learn farther, that if any servants of Christ have faithfully, in a continued course, to the end of their time, been intent upon this business, preaching the words of this life, their memory ought to be very precious to us when they are gone: they who have been employed in this work, called to it by God, it is all one whether his mind were signified to them by an angel, or any other way. For it was not an angel that gave the authority, but only conveyed this particular command, as hath been noted. When God in his ordinary method hath called forth a servant of his to preach the words of this life, and he hath laboured in it faithfully to the uttermost, the memory of such a one ought to be very dear and precious to all to whom he was known, and that have had opportunity of hearing from him the words of eternal life, or that shall receive a faithful account of him. We are so directed and taught, Heb. xiii. 7, 8. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day,

and for ever. And he still as much requires the same thing as ever he did.

And truly such a servant of Christ was this my dear and worthy brother, the very reverend Mr. Vink, whom God hath lately taken from among us. He was the son of a noted citizen of Norwich: nor will equal judges of his true worth think it a despicable degree of lustre added to that city, that such a man was born there. His ancestors were early protestants, when the Reformation was struggling for a birth in Flanders. Where, when the persecution against that profession began to rage, the zeal and fervour of their religion not admitting to be concealed, or suffering them to temporize, Providence ordered their seasonable transportation to that city of refuge, which became native to their following posterity, and among them to this worthy man; who hath often been heard to say, He reckoned it a greater honour to have descended from so pious ancestors, than if he could have derived his pedigree from the greatest princes. He was, indeed, designed for multiplying the offspring of the everlasting Father; and seemed formed for this work from his entrance upon the stage of this world: so were those things very early interwoven in the frame and temper of his soul, that were to be the elements of great future usefulness in this kind of service. For, in his very tender years there appeared very early religion, great seriousness, an habitual awe and reverence of the Divine Majesty; insomuch that none could observe when he first began to be a fearer of God. Which pious disposition of mind was in conjunction with so great a propensity and addictedness to books, with desire of learning, as was very unusual at that age, even in his childhood.

And very early was his preparatory endeavour for that noble employment to which he afterwards betook himself. For as nature and grace appeared to have betimes combined to frame him as an instrument for such service; it was soon very evident, that in the former, God had inlaid a deeper foundation, enduring him with singular parts, above the common rate; which as they came gradually to shine out, in the great improvements he had made, under instruction, in a little time; there appeared such quickness of apprehension, solidity of judgment, strength of memory, quickness of fancy, without exorbitancy, as are seldom found to meet together: and these were accompanied with so spontaneous diligence beyond what the usual methods of education obliged him to, that in his tender years, while yet under the eye of his parents, they have thought it requisite sometimes to hide his books, lest he should injure himself by over-intent and close study. So that he was ripe for a university much younger than others ordinarily are. Accordingly he was sent up in his fourteenth year to Cambridge, where he remained many years a fellow and great ornament of Pembroke-Hall, even beyond the time of his taking the degree of bachelor of divinity; in which time he had treasured up a large stock of all useful learning, and might be fitly styled a universal scholar. But religion governing the whole course of his studies, kept him steady to his great end; and made him most intent upon such things as might render him most useful for his designed work. The original languages, with such rational learning as was subservient to theology; and then theology, and the study of the Holy Scriptures themselves.

For diversion he was no stranger to history, *viz.* civil, which was fundamental but more diverting; as well as ecclesiastical, which was more immediately necessary to his purpose. And among his other accomplishments, his skill and accuracy in the Latin tongue was, as I have been otherwise informed, much remarked in the university; so that the professor in the chair, when he took the abovementioned degree, (as was reported by an eye and earwitness,) disputing *pro formâ* with him, after he had somewhat longer than ordinary opposed him, he still answering in neat and elegant Latin, said, Mr. Vink, I only so long continued my opposition to you, to give you opportunity to entertain the auditory with that judgment and eloquence, which have appeared in your answers. And that to express himself politely in that tongue was become habitual and familiar to him, appeared in that writing, in that language, a weekly account of the more remarkable things that occurred to him in the course of his life; which since his death hath come to my view: though in such a case a man only writes to himself; yet I have observed therein such strictures of elegancy, both of style and phrase, as signified it was become impossible to him, if he writ any thing, not to write handsomely, and as might become both a Christian and a scholar.

This narrative was continued until his growing infirmities put a period to it, some months sooner than to his life itself. The mention of it here you see, was occasional, and somewhat digressive. Therefore, to return, when he had passed through the long course of his academical studies and employment, London, whither his fame had now reached, could not long want such a man. Hither he was called; and here he shone a bright light in two churches of this city successively, *viz.* Saint Michael's in Cornhill, which he easily quitted upon another's claim; more from an indisposition to contend, which was little suitable to his calm temper, than from defect of title, could his friends, that so highly valued him, have prevailed with him to admit of its being disputed; but they had the less reason to be urgent upon him, for that he was so immediately chosen to a neighbour church, where he continued preaching the words of this life, till August 24, 1662, when not satisfied with some things in the act that then took place, he calmly quitted his station, but not his ministry; which he never refused to exercise, when desired, in distinct assemblies, when they had only the favour of a connivance. But his more ordinary course was, after he was deprived of his former public liberty, to preach for many years, as the apostle Paul did, in his own hired house; whither his great abilities, and most lively vigorous ministry, drew an assembly not inconsiderable; whereto he both dispensed the word, and (to such as were qualified, and desirous) the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at certain seasons. And this course he continued, especially that of preaching in his house, till bodily disability made it impossible to him; which then he deeply lamented. Yet did he not decline all communion with the established church. Whereupon he had experience of the haughty, supercilious temper of some men's spirits, on the one hand, and the other; who assume to themselves an interdicted, unhallowed liberty of sitting in judgment upon other men's consciences; and adventure to censure them, as men of no conscience, that abandon not their own, to follow theirs; taking notice, sometimes with just regret, that he incurred the anger of two sorts of men; of some, that he went no further; of others, that he went so far.

Looking into his memoirs, I found that rich vein of religion and godliness, running throughout the whole, that I think no serious man could read them without being very deeply affected therewith. Week after week, whatsoever was more remarkable, relating to himself, his family, or the church of God, is punctually set down, and intermixed with most pious ejaculations, "My God, and my All." If any trouble occurred, "yet God is mine, and I am his." You every where discern the breathings of a holy devout soul. Ejaculatory supplications are very frequent for his relatives, and domestics, "The Lord sanctify them, the Lord wash them, the Lord protect them, lead them by the truth and counsels." On all occasions that spirit of prayer and universal godliness discovers itself all along, mixed with the greatest tenderness and compassion that I have any where met with. If any one were sick in his family, his dear consort, his son, daughter, or daughter-in-law, his most beloved brother, or if a servant, male or female, 'tis noted down, with his *suspiria*, the breathings forth of earnest supplications on their behalf. And afterwards upon their recovery, most solemn thanksgivings. But if any one died, then such self-humiliation, such lying low before the Lord, such yielding compliance with the Divine pleasure, with the design of spiritual improvement thereby, as I believe hath been seldom seen. And in whatsoever case, there are expressions of a steady trust in God, in reference to all his affairs, both of this world and that which is to come. If any difficulties came in view, upon the mention thereof, he presently subjoins, "But I will trust in God; he will show me the plain and the right way, wherein he would have me to go." His charity to the distressed was always flowing, and very exemplary; but much more the pity which wrought in his heart towards such,

whose miseries and necessities were such, as it was never possible for him to relieve proportionably to the largeness of his soul. He in the mean time suffered the calamity of every one whose case came to his notice. His humility was such, as did shine through all his other excellencies. He was, indeed, a great man in every one's eyes but his own. No one ever thought meanly of him, that knew him, but himself. His love of solitude and retirement was peculiarly remarkable. No man had more opportunity, in his circumstances, to multiply friends and acquaintance; but I never knew any one who minded and studied it less; yet where once he was acquainted, there could not be a more pleasant and delectable friend. It was remote from him to seek acquaintance, nor did he need; it was enough for him to receive those, that were so kind to themselves as to seek his. And 'tis evident, that love of solitude is peculiar to those, who, through the grace of God, and especially a sort of self-benignity, have been capable of becoming good company to themselves. For empty persons, or such as are only full of malignity, men of ill minds, and conscious to themselves of ill design, for such I do not wonder, that of all things, they care not to be alone. They can never be grateful company to themselves. But he had laid up such a treasure of human and divine knowledge, that I know not where he could find pleasanter company than his own. And his special gratitude for divine mercies was very observable. I have found, in his memorials, he was much in admiring God, that he had done so much for him and his, and more especially for the helps he had from heaven in the performance of his ministerial work. Blessed be God for the assistance he gave me such a day. And very particularly at the Lord's supper. Blessed be God for what hath past between him and me at his table; blessed be God that his bonds have taken hold of my soul!

Though his temper, and the chosen circumstances of his life, kept off from him in great part, more frequent occasions of communicating to the world the rich treasures wherewith his mind was stored, yet when such occasions have occurred, he neglected them not. But while, through his own continuing dissatisfaction, he remained excluded from a public station; besides his constant ministerial labours, in a private way, he embraced other occasions that Providence offered, of doing such work as became much more public; and wherein he did more than speak from a pulpit to a single congregation of hearers, speaking from the press to the world, as any should think fit to be his readers. Divers of his excellent sermons have been long extant to common view, wherein, being dead, he yet speaketh. An account of which, though elsewhere given,[b] it is not unfit here to repeat. As, before his ejection, he had one sermon in the first volume of the Morning Exercises, preached in the church of Saint Giles, upon Original Sin; so after it, he had another, in that against popery, upon the Grounds of the Protestants' Separation from the Church of Rome. Another, upon the Worth of the Soul, in the continuation of the Morning Exercise Questions, with another, on Gospel Grace the best Motive to Holiness, vol. 4. And to these I must add that valuable performance of his on the Acts of the Holy Apostles, in the supplement to Mr. Pool's Annotations on the Bible, (by mistake ascribed to another worthy person, who hath to me disclaimed it, and assured me it was Mr. Vink's.) And it is a satisfaction to me, that I have his concurring judgment in the interpretation of this text. Who writing upon it, when he could little apprehend his own funeral sermon was, so many years after, to be preached from it, tells us, that though some admit of an hypallage in the expression, "the words of this life," and join the pronoun to the other substantive, reading it, These words of life.—Because by this life is ordinarily understood the present temporary life, as in 1 Cor. xv. 19. Yet he says, there needs not this translatious sense; by this life the angel might very well understand, eternal life, and salvation, for that was it which the Sadducees denied, and for the preaching of which life the apostles were imprisoned. To which purpose also the learned Doctor Hammond speaks in his annotations on the same place.

The words of this life he preached to the last, and lived it, in its initial state, as he now lives it (being in the kind, the same life) in its perfect, eternal state. And we may now put in him with those holy men (as he speaks in the argument, which he prefixes to this book) who having lived answerably to their profession and hope, do when we read these things, seem to speak unto us, and tell us, (what they say was inscribed upon the statue of some deified hero,) *Si feceritis sicut nos, eritis sicut nos; If ye shall live as we have done, and suffer as we have suffered, then shall you be* (glorious and happy) *as we are.* And yet such a life as this must end, a life transacted at such a rate! Whither should this carry and direct all our thoughts and aspirings? I bless God we have such instances of many, of whom we must say, it is impossible but that such men are got into a good state. A great confirmation of the truth of our religion. We must be assured such a one cannot be lost in a grave; his works must follow him into a higher region. But I add,

7. That, since they who do preach the words of life, do yet themselves die, let us attend upon their ministry accordingly. We have such and such to preach to us the words of life; but they are mortal men, and must not preach to us always. Therefore let such a thought take place; take we heed that we do not lose them, while we have them: O let the words of life, which they preach, be entertained as such. Our Saviour saith of John the Baptist, he was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. You can rejoice in no such light but for a season. You may say, if such and such that are now preaching to us the word of life do drop, God can raise up others in their room to preach the same word: and I hope he will, that when such a one as I drop, he will raise up some other to preach to you at another rate, with more warmth, and vigour, and success, than ever I have done. But yet you are to consider that you are mortal too, as well as we. And admit you have those who shall far exceed them that have gone before; yet you know not how short your time may be under them. Therefore whatever your hand finds out to do in this kind, do it with all your might. Labour to catch at the words of this life, as once one in distress did at words of a much inferior concern, and when a meaner life hung in doubt. We are continually hovering between life and death! How fast are we dropping away from one another! Every one that dies from among us, doth, even dying, utter such a voice. Amidst so many deaths, admit, draw in, as vital breath, the words of this life. Dread, as the most frightful of all deaths, that the very words of this life should be to you the savour of death unto death.

b In Mr. Calamy's Abridgment, &c.

A FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR

MRS. ESTHER SAMPSON.

TO MY WORTHY FRIEND DR. HENRY SAMPSON.

SIR,

I HAVE perused the papers which you sent me, and find, as far as I can recollect, they contain in them the substance of what was delivered; with no more mistakes than is usual in writing from the mouth of one who is not of the slowest speakers.

Some things besides, which the limits of the time allowed not to be spoken, (having some short memorials of them by me,) I have added, conceiving they might also contribute towards the good end you proposed to yourself, in so earnestly desiring this publication, the assisting of their patience, and their good and placid thoughts of God, who are exercised under long and languishing distempers. The observations which your profession hath occasioned you to make, in the cases of many others, hath I doubt not let you see the need of somewhat to this purpose; otherwise the example you have had so long before your eyes of so calm and composed a temper, in this excellent relative of yours, might have made you less apprehensive how great an addition a fretful inquiet spirit is, both to the sin and the affliction of a sickly state. I am sensible your own affliction is great, in the loss you now sustain; the relief will be great, and suitable, which the forethoughts of that state will afford, where they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God, in heaven.

I am, Sir,
In much sincerity and affection, yours
to serve you in the work and labour of the Gospel,
J. H.

LUKE XIII. 16.

AND OUGHT NOT THIS WOMAN, BEING A DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM, WHOM SATAN HATH BOUND, LO, THESE EIGHTEEN YEARS, BE LOOSED FROM THIS BOND ON THE SABBATH DAY?

You will soon see the occasion and connexion of these words, by viewing over the whole paragraph to which they belong. Ver. 10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. (11.) And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. (12.) When Jesus saw her, he said to her Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. (13.) And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. (14.) And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. (15.) The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite! doth not each of you on the sabbath loose his ox and his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? (16.) And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day? (17.) And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Inasmuch as our blessed Lord spake these words, and did the thing which occasioned them, upon that which was, with the Jews, their sabbath-day; it cannot be unfit for us to consider them upon ours, they so fitly leading us to consider also another release, wrought for a daughter of Abraham too, on our sabbath-day. It was formerly told you upon what occasion, and I doubt not but you generally know upon whose account, we were to divert from our usual course and subject at this time. Nor could any thing have been more suitable to the present occasion, for not only was this daughter of Abraham released from her infirmity upon the sabbath-day; but the time wherein it remained upon her, in a great and manifold complication, was (as her surviving consort hath acquainted me, and who therefore recommended this subject) precisely about eighteen years.

There are, 'tis true, disagreements between our case and that case in the text, which do not therefore render both together less instructive to us, but the more. And, to make way to what may be so, you must here take notice, that these words are part of our Lord's defence of what he had done in performing this work of mercy, wherein what he says is justly severe, and very clearly convictive. It is very deserved and just severity, that he called him, who cavilled in the case, by his own true name, Thou hypocrite. He, under pretence of great sanctity, discovers the highest enmity, even against our blessed Lord himself, who came (being sent) upon the holiest and kindest design into this world. The zeal which he pretends for the observation of the sabbath, could not be the thing that he did really mean, or that acted him in this case; for it was not likely he could be ignorant of what was a known adjudged case among the Jews, (as some of their own Rabbies[a] inform us,) he violated not the sabbath so much as their own canons allowed. See his Works, vol. 2.

a Vid Maimon. constitut. de fundam. c. 5, 9. cum Abrav. N. 13, 14. And, as our own Dr. Lightfoot says upon that question of our Lord's, Is it lawful to heal upon the sabbath-day? (quoting divers more of theirs to that purpose,)

that all needful endeavours ought to be used for the cure of the sick upon the sabbath-day. So as that he very well knew, no rule could be broken in this case. But this he reckons was somewhat plausible, and he pleases himself in it, that he could tell how to vent his spite against Christ and Christianity, under a mock-show of great sanctimony. And our Lord justly calls him what indeed he was, when he would thus seem what he was not. It was not that he cared for religion, or for any thing of real sanctity, of which a due and just observation of the sabbath was a real part; but that he had a mind, as far as conveniently he could, to express his displeasure at that evidence and lustre, wherewith the glorious works our Lord wrought evinced him to be the Messiah; while yet he was struck with that awe of him, that he adventures not to direct his reproof to him, but the people.

It is here by the way to be noted, that they were not thus disaffected to our Lord, and the religion he was about to introduce; no, but this ceremonious bigot, a ruler of the synagogue, was the ill-pleased disaffected person.

I shall not trouble you with the discussion what sort of power it was that belonged to that office. Some, well acquainted with the Jewish writings, say that the ruler of the synagogue was not wont himself to officiate, as minister *in sacris*; but his business was *circa sacra*, to regulate the administration. We consider not his power, but his ill-will and enmity against Christ and true religion. The people, in the mean time, thronged after him in multitudes, and beheld the great works he wrought with joy, and glorified God. Only where was more power, and probably more knowledge, there was more too of a peevish spite and envy, that the interest of our Lord was, by so proper means, growing in the world. A sad (and not a new) thing! that religion should have most opposition, whence it should have most of countenance, and advantage to dilate and spread itself. Do any of the rulers believe on him? But the people (whom they despised, and pronounced accursed for that reason) were more apt and forward to receive the Gospel, John vii. 48, 49. The more there is of light, unaccompanied with a pious inclination, the higher, the more intense and fervent, the finer and more subtle is the venom and malice against Christ, and real Christianity.

But our Lord was not diverted from his kind and compassionate design, by any such obstructions as these. His love triumphs over them, and he makes that discovery of his compassion which could not but carry the clearest conviction with it; as his reproof carried the brightest justice. Why what, saith he, Do not any of you loose an ox or an ass from the stall on the sabbath-day? and shall not I loose a daughter of Abraham? 'Tis like she was a daughter of Abraham, not only as being a Jewess, but as being a believer, as being, according to Scripture language, of Abraham's seed in the spiritual sense, as well as the natural, and he was the more peculiarly compassionate upon that account; and yet more, because her ail proceeded from the malignant influence of the devil. Shall not I loose such a one whom Satan hath bound, that great enemy of mankind? Why should not I show myself so much the more a friend, by how much the more he appears an enemy, and give the earliest relief the matter can admit?

'Tis very true indeed, his compassion was never to incline him to do unfit and unseasonable things, or things that were no way subservient to his principal end; but such a subserviency being supposed, his relief must be with the earliest, to-day before morrow, though it were the sabbath-day. And so now you have the ground of discourse plainly in view before you. That the devil cannot be more maliciously intent to afflict those that relate to God (even, when it is in his power, with bodily distempers) than our Lord Jesus is compassionately willing to relieve them, without distinction of time, when it shall be consistent with, and subservient to, his higher and greater purposes. In speaking to this, I shall,

I. Touch briefly upon what is here expressed in the text, the hand that Satan may have in the afflictions, yea and in the bodily distempers, of men, and even of them that belong to God among them.

II. What hand our Lord Jesus has in their relief and releasement

III. How far we may understand, or may reasonably expect, his compassion to influence him, in such cases.

IV. I shall show that however the release be wrought, it is done very mercifully towards them that belong peculiarly to God. And so make use of all.

I. Somewhat briefly as to that first query: What hand it is supposable the devil may have in the afflictions of men, and more particularly of them that belong to God; as that woman being a daughter of Abraham, was to be considered as one within the compass of God's covenant, and not improbably as one that, in the strictest sense, was in covenant with God.

1. It is plain, in the text, the devil had a direct hand in her distemper, called a spirit of infirmity. There were more evident and more frequent instances of this kind in that time, the devil then setting himself more openly to contend against the incarnate Son of God, upon his more open appearance to rescue and recover an apostate world from under his dominion and tyranny. But as to more ordinary cases we may further consider,

2. That the devil is a constant enemy to mankind, apt and inclined, as far as God permits him, to do men all the mischief he can.

3. That as he first introduced sin into the world, so he hath; by consequence, all the calamities that afflict it.

There had been no death, sickness, or distemper upon the bodies of men, but from hence. Consider the devil, therefore, as the prince and leader of the apostacy, who first drew man into transgression, and thereby rendered him liable to the justice of his Maker, turned his paradise into a desert, and a region of immortal undecaying life into a valley of sickly languishings and death itself. So may he be said to have had a (remoter) hand, in binding not only this daughter of Abraham, but every child of Adam, in all the afflictions, maladies, and distempers which befall them here; and finally in the bonds of death too whereof he is said to have had the power, Heb. ii. 14, 15 Though the children of the second Adam (with whom, for this purpose, he was partaker of flesh and blood, and became with them a son of Abraham, and of his seed) are, by being so bound, released and made free, both from death, and the bondage of fearing it, to which they were otherwise subject all their days; as we shall further see anon.

4. Though God do not ordinarily allow him more power, yet we may well suppose him to have more malice against these children of Abraham, (who thereby pass into the account of his own children also,) being more intent upon vexing and afflicting whom he apprehends or suspects he shall never be able to destroy; and always apt to use all the power shall be allowed him, to this mischievous purpose. We find that the afflictions of the people of God, in other kinds, and even in this kind, are expressly often, attributed to the devil. In other kinds: Satan shall cast some of you into prison, Rev. ii. 10. And divers think that thorn in the flesh, which the apostle suffered, (2 Cor. xii.) was some acute bodily pain; and he says expressly, It was a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him. He, 'tis said, smote Job with the tormenting biles that afflicted him so grievously, and so long, and brought the other calamities upon him, that you read of in his story.

5. And again it is further to be considered, that whereas in all diseases the morbific matter, whether immediate in men's bodies, or remoter in the encompassing air, differs not from other matter, otherwise than only in the various disposition, figuration, and motion of parts and particles, whereof it is made up; inasmuch as the devil is called the prince of the power of the air, we know nothing to the contrary, but that he may frequently so modify that, as that it shall have most pernicious influences upon the bodies of men; and upon those especially, so far as God permits, that he has any greater malice against.

6. And again (supposing this) it is not a stranger thing that God should permit him to afflict the bodies of them that belong to him, than to disturb their minds. Sure their bodies are not more sacred. If we should suppose that he may some way or other perniciously agitate the humours in human bodies, 'tis no harder a supposition than that he should so variously form the images in the fancy, by which he tempts; for herein surely he comes nearer us, and is more inward to us.

7. Nor is it less supposable that God should, in some instances, permit the devils to follow their inclinations in afflicting his people, than wicked men to follow theirs, which, in the general, carry them to the same thing; when he knows how to turn the one to after-advantage, as well as the other. But we have no ground to think, notwithstanding all this, that the wisdom and goodness of Providence will ordinarily permit that this agency of the devil, in the mentioned cases, shall be altogether in a contra-natural way; but only, by so moving and acting with natural causes, that he may be also obviated, through the ordinary blessing of God, by natural means and causes too. Much less is it reasonable that diseases should be themselves reckoned very devils, as was the opinion of the gnostics of old, wherein they much concurred with the manichees; and whom, together with them, the more honest-minded pagan Plotinus so copiously confutes (though that was more anciently a common opinion, the Septuagint's rendering the word that signifies *plague* by the word δαιμόνιον, in several places of Scripture, seems to intimate. But the commonness of such an opinion, in a dark time, signifies nothing to sway ours this way or that.) But whatsoever hand the devil may be supposed to have in their afflictions or sicknesses that belong to God, we are,

II. Sure that our Lord Jesus has a most kind hand (whensoever it is) in their release; which though it were here in a more extraordinary and immediate way, and beside the course of nature, the disparity in this case signifies nothing to the lessening of the favour, towards those whom he vouchsafes to relieve in other cases; for the influence that he has in ordinary cases is as truly divine. If the cure of a diseased person be wrought, by his blessing upon ordinary natural means; his co-operating with nature is less amazing, but not less effectual, or less kind: as also the efflux from God is (for his own part) as real, when he works with second causes, as without them, and as immediately reaches the effect, in both the senses of immediateness, whereof so much noise is made in the schools.

And we must further know our Lord Christ is now the universal Regent of all nature, even as he is the Christ, the world being devolved into his hands, and all power being given to him both in heaven and earth. He is Lord of all. When therefore any of you are sick, it is by his disposal if you are recovered out of that sickness. Nor is his agency less or lower, whether it be by blessing a medicine, or working a miracle; his power and love are the same either way. And know there is an honour and acknowledgment due from Christians to their great crucified Lord, who hath founded a dominion over this world in his blood, who died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of living and dead. Therefore you are to reckon you are beholden to Christ for all your recoveries, and all your refreshings that you meet with, amidst the many infirmities and frailties of this your present mortal state.

And if the release be by death, as the case is which we now have specially to do with, that universal power of his, over all lives, must be understood immediately to reach to that case too. It is he that measures lives, that lengthens them out, and cuts them shorter at his own pleasure. And as to those that are more peculiarly his own, it is a more peculiar and favourable superintendency that he has over that affair, even of their very dying. Their death is precious in his sight. He with a most gentle tender hand unties the knot of man, releases and receives the dislodging soul: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, as dying Stephen speaks. But,

III. We are to consider how far our Lord Jesus his compassion concerns him in such cases, or wherein that may move him to interpose in them, so as in this case he did.—And here two things are to be asserted—1. That his compassion has not supreme and principal influence in this case;—2. That yet it hath real influence.

1. That it hath not supreme or principal influence in such cases. And this doth really require to be more principally insisted on, as of greater importance to narrow, terrene minds, that are apt to measure all things by themselves, and in reference to their own little sphere and compass; and to themselves only in their present state, as they are inhabitants of this minute spot of earth; as if all things ought to bend and yield to their present convenience and accommodation here. Whereupon they wonder when they are sick, and in pain, God doth not presently relieve and ease them; and think they should do so for any friend, or neighbour, if it were in their power.

Know, therefore, 'twas not from compassion, as the solitary or as the chief inducement, that our Lord did work this release for this daughter of Abraham. That cannot be supposed, for he can never be understood to make a creature, and the advantages of a creature, his supreme end. That would have been to invert the order of things, to dethrone God, and deify man, and had been itself a real sort of that idolatry, which was one among the many horrid evils which he purposely came to redress and give remedy to in this apostate, degenerate world. He had a greater inducement, *i. e.* that he might diffuse the glory of God among the children of men; and that he might give evidence thereby to the truth of his own mission, and prove most convincingly that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, the very person that was anointed, and sent about that great undertaking, to recover God's rights in this lapsed world, to bring about a reconciliation between God and men. And upon this account, when he wrought cures upon men's bodies, it was out of a higher compassion to their souls. And though even this itself, of saving men's souls, was not his highest design, but the glory of God, (as we shall see further by and by,) yet it being truly designed by him, and more principally than their bodily ease and relief, this was an apt means to this his lower end. For whereas, in order to this, he was to manifest himself a Divine Saviour; 'twas requisite he should give a joint and an equal demonstration of the two things which his being so implies, his God-like power, and love. The former alone it did not serve his purpose to show, which he might have shown as much by inflicting plagues on men's bodies, as working cures; by striking them with blindness, lameness, &c. as by giving them sight and soundness. But it was necessary to his end his miracles should be beneficent, and that he should (as it is elsewhere said in the evangelical story he did) go about doing good, and not make men afraid of him, by showing the power of a God in destructive strokes and judgments; but (which became a Saviour) express a divine good-will towards men, and thereby make his way into their hearts, bring them to understand and own a Saviour; and as such to fall in and comply with his kind design towards them. And this, as it served to exalt God in the world, chiefly induced him to work this present cure. If his compassion towards a poor afflicted woman, labouring under bodily infirmity, were his principal inducement; if, therefore, she must be presently cured out of hand, even on the sabbath-day, because she had been now bound eighteen years; why, I pray you, was she to have been bound eighteen years? or why bound at all? His divine knowledge of the case, and power to have redressed or prevented it, had as well served his compassionate inclination long before. Or why was not such a course formerly set on foot, and continued in the world, that men might be cured of blindness, deafness, lameness, fevers, dropsies, or whatsoever other maladies, easily, and by speaking a word, in any former time? Why was it deferred to this time? Or why hath not such a course been kept a-foot ever since his ascension? Hath heaven rendered him less merciful and compassionate? Is it so unkind and ill-natured a place? 'Tis true that his apology for the cure he now wrought, to this ruler of the synagogue, seems to have no higher reference; nor was he bound, unseasonably, to declare his utmost end and design, to a prejudiced, malicious enemy. That was to speak itself, to shine by its own light, and by such means and methods as these, gradually to make its own way into less obstructed minds, insensibly sliding in upon them; which might better be done (time being given at leisure to consider things) by the real evidence which his works carried with them, than by industrious and often-repeated verbal commentaries and expositions.

He sometimes spake it out expressly, as he thought fit, to competent and more prepared hearers, that his great design was to make himself and his errand to be understood; who he was, and what he came into the world for; that he was the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and that his business was to save them that were lost; and to

restore God's interest in an apostate lost world whose rights were to be cared for, in the first place. He redeemed us to God by his blood, Rev. v. 9. Or for the glory of God, as he summed it up in the case of Lazarus, when he was told of his being sick, John xi. 4. This sickness is not unto death, *i. e.* it was not to terminate in a continuing death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of man might be glorified; the same account which this evangelist gives of all these his great works, and why they were recorded, that we might believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, &c. chap. xx. 30. And otherwise was it so considerable a thing, that a man well got out of this fearful gulf, as Lazarus now was, should be fetched back again! that so mighty a wonder should be wrought! that the enclosure of the grave should be torn open! and the released soul should be again drawn down, as a bird escaped, caught back into its former confinement, to converse a while longer amidst the impurities of a world lying in wickedness, and with shadows, in a world the fashion whereof passes away!

No, miracles were not so cheap things. We may observe the great and wise God hath, for great and weighty reasons, been always very sparing in making very observable innovations upon nature, or any considerable changes in the ordinary course and method of natural causes, and their operations, as a thing less suitable to a state of probation, wherein men were to be held in this world. And hath only been wont to do it, where the inconvenience was to be balanced by preponderating greater reasons; which might as much require that he should depart from the fixed rule sometimes, as other reasons might, that he should not do it often. It was equally necessary that miracles should not be common, as that there should be any wrought at all; and in great part for the same reason. For if they were common, they must lose the only design for which they could be at all useful. If God should do, in this kind, what is not necessary, he should the less effect by it that which is; inasmuch as they are only useful as they are strange, and, in the natural way, unaccountable. But there is nothing so great in this kind, but ceases to be thought strange if it be common; otherwise, is not the forming of the eye, in itself, as great a thing as to give sight to the blind? or the framing such a world as this as great a thing, as the most stupendous miracle that ever was wrought in it?

It was indeed necessary somewhat extraordinary should at first be done, to demonstrate that man, Jesus of Nazareth, to be the Son of God; which it was impossible should otherwise be known. When that was fully done, it was not necessary there should still be a repetition of miracles from age to age, to prove the former were wrought, or the truth of the narratives which reported them. That was sufficiently to be known in the ordinary way, as other matters of fact are, or other history, about which there is no doubt made among men. And the history of these things has greater advantages to recommend it to the certain belief of after-time, than most that ever were writ besides, upon many accounts. It was indeed most becoming the majesty, wisdom, and goodness of God (taken together) to do what might answer the real necessities of men, whom he was designing to save; but not to indulge their curiosity, nor their unaccountable dulness, sloth, or prejudice, whereby they may be unapt to inquire about or receive plain things.

Therefore miracles were to be done as rarities, sometimes, not at all times; and at such a time, and upon such an occasion, most of all to notify and signalize the Redeemer, at his first appearance, to draw men's eyes upon him, that they might take notice of him, and demean themselves towards him accordingly. This was to be done sufficiently once for all. And the great stupidity of the world made a matter, which needed some supernatural evidence, need so much in that kind. Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe. And if he did so far comply with the necessity of degenerate humanity, as to give once some signal convictive evidence that he was the Christ; the Divine wisdom would take care it should not be so often done, as to become trivial, and insignificant to its proper end; the importance whereof was such, as that it ought to transcend any regard to the welfare of men's bodies, but not to exclude it. Which we now come briefly to show, in the next place, *viz.*

2. That though compassion towards an infirm creature, under bodily distemper, was not the principal inducement unto this cure; it was a real one. Our Lord doth really compassionate the frailties of those that relate to him while they dwell in mortal flesh. He himself bears our sicknesses. He has a tenderness towards them, even while he doth not think it fit actually to release and set them free; which makes way to what was proposed, in the last place, to be insisted on, as preparatory to the intended use.

IV. That in what way soever our Lord Jesus works a release for them that are most specially his own, from their bodily distempers, he doth it in mercy to them. He lets their affliction continue upon them in mercy, greater mercy, indeed, than would be in an unseasonable deliverance. But when he sees it a fit season to give them a release, that is an unquestionable mercy too; though it be not in such a way, as appears such to vulgar eyes.

It is more easily apprehensible to be from compassion, if he relieves a poor, pained, weak, languishing, sickly creature, by giving renewed strength, and ease, and health in this world. But when the release is by death, as in the case we have under our further present consideration, it is hard to persuade that this is done in mercy, that there is compassion in this case. There is, 'tis true, in this a manifest disparity, but not a disadvantageous one. Is it a less thing to release a holy soul from the body, than from bodily distempers? It can only be so in the opinion of such blind moles of the earth, as the children of men are now generally become. But let the case be considered according to its true and real import. Why! a recovery from sickness is but an adjournment of death, 'tis but death deferred a while. When there is a release wrought in such a way as this in which hers was wrought, whom God hath lately taken from amongst us; here is a cure, not only of one bodily distemper, but of all; not only of actual diseasedness, but of the possibility of ever being diseased more: here is a cure wrought, not only of infirmity, but of death, for the saints conquer death by suffering it; yea, a cure, not of death only, but of mortality, of any liableness to death, so as it can never touch them more; yea further, not only of bodily diseases, but of spiritual too, far worse and more grievous than all bodily diseases whatsoever; a cure of blindness of mind, deadness, and hardness of heart, of all indispositions towards God, his ways, and presence, towards the most spiritual duties, and the best and most excellent of our enjoyments. The body of sin and the mortal body are both put off together. The imprisoned soul is set free, and enters upon a state of everlasting liberty; is released from the bands of death, of whatsoever kind, and in the highest, fullest sense, shall reign in life, through Jesus Christ. What is the decease of a saint, but a translation out of a valley of death, a golgotha, a place of skulls, a region where death reigns, into the region of perfect and everlasting life? It is not to be called death simply or absolutely, but with diminution; 'tis death only in a certain respect, when in a higher and much more considerable respect, it is a birth rather, a dying out of one world, and a being born at the same time into another, a much more lightsome, a purer, and more glorious world. The soul is cured in a moment, of whatsoever was grievous or afflicting to it; and the body put into a certain way of cure, of being made from an earthly, mean, mortal thing, heavenly, spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal; from a vile, a glorious body, like Christ's own, and by that power, by which he can subdue all things to himself, Phil. iii. 21.

And now for use.

1. Learn that there is no inconsistency in the case, that the same person should be at once the subject of long-continued bodily affliction, and of divine compassion. These are reconcileable things; sickly languishings, under which one may be ready to fail; and compassions, that fail not. This is a common theme, but the due consideration of it is too little common. Let it now be considered, with impartial equity, and with deep seriousness. Do you think the all-comprehending mind of the Son of God now first began to pity this daughter of Abraham? While he was not yet ascended, this attribution is given him; otherwise, no doubt, than as a false compliment; Lord, thou knowest all things.

—Since his ascension, we are assured he hath a feeling of our infirmities, so as to be touched with them, a continuing sympathy, remembering the inconveniences of that state he had passed through, (as she once, *non ignara mali, &c.*) and is always ready, therefore, to do the part of a faithful and merciful high priest. Before his descent, we must, with equal reason, suppose him to have an entire prospect of the sad case of wretched mortals, in this miserable world of ours. What else made him descend? And after that he was descended, this mark could not but lie still before the eye of his Divine mind, to which all his works were known from the beginning of the world. Yet the cure is deferred, the release is not given till the appointed season. When it is the case of any of you to be afflicted with long sickness, and to feel the tediousness of a lingering disease, (count upon it that it may be so, as 'tis like it hath been, with divers of you,) do not then permit the matter to the censure of an incompetent, partial judge. If you consult flesh and blood, if sense be to pronounce in the case and give judgment, how hard will it be to persuade that you are not neglected in your languishings, that your groans and faintings are unpitied; though you are so plainly told, that whom the Lord loves, he chastens? Are you not ready to say, How can this stand with being, at the same time, the object of divine pity? If he pity me, would he let me lie and languish thus, in so miserable a plight, day after day, and year after year? Yes, these things very well agree, and I would fain shortly evince to you that they do.

(1.) His compassion may sufficiently be evidenced in another kind and by another sort of instances. Sure it will speak compassion, if he frequently visit his frail infirm creatures, and by his visitation preserve their spirits, if he support them, if he refresh them, this is grace. My grace shall be sufficient for thee, saith he to the great apostle, when he refused to release him from that thorn in the flesh, that messenger of Satan that did buffet him.

(2.) Besides, compassion may appear by this kind of dispensation itself. It may not only carry that with it, but in it, which may show good-will. If long-continued affliction may be supposed to proceed from compassion, it doth much more consist with it. It may proceed from compassion, and bear the relation to it of an effect to the cause. We find it expressly so said in Scripture, and who can so truly speak God's mind as himself? He afflicts in very faithfulness, and as many as the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives, Prov. iii. 12. quoted Heb. xii. 5, 6. Rev. iii. 19. Affliction must be the effect of his real, and most sincere good-will, and compassion, though of long continuance, if it be apt, and intended to do you good, in higher and in greater regards than those wherein you suffer. Or if the good your affliction does you, or is fitly designed to do you, be of a nobler and more excellent kind, than that whereof it deprives you; it must be understood, not only to be consistent with kindness and good-will, but to be produced of it. For the same principle that intends the end, must also intend the proper means that serve to effect it. Now the kind of this good is thus to be estimated. You read, Psal. ciii. 13. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him. As a father. The relation he is in to them, is that of a father to his children. But we must understand under what notion he is related; and we are told, Heb. xii. 9, 10. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not then much rather be in subjection to the Father of our spirits and live? For they, verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. We have here an account where the relation terminates, and see both the object of his more special kindness and good-will, which accompany the relation, and the end of it. He is the Father of their spirits; whence, therefore, we may collect, the object of that love, which goes with the relation, must be their spirits also; the end of it is their spiritual advantage, to make them partakers of his own holiness. His holiness is a lofty word, and carries the matter high. Understanding it soberly, (as we may be sure it was meant,) it must signify the holiness which he hath himself impressed, and the impression whereof is the lively resemblance and image of his own. And is not this a good, of a nobler and more excellent kind, than we can lose by a sickness? better than the ease of this vile flesh, that was made out of dust, and tends thither? The object is their spirits, for there the kindness, that belongs to the relation, must terminate, where the relation terminates. How much more shall we not be subject to the Father of our spirits, and live? The Father of our spirits is there contradistinguished from the fathers of our flesh. God is not the Father of our flesh, but the Father of our spirits; he is the Creator of our flesh, too; our flesh is his creature, but not his offspring. There must be a similitude and likeness of nature between a father, and a child, which there is not necessarily between a maker and the thing made. In respect of our spiritual part, we are his offspring; and he is so a Father to us, both as the souls of men in common bear his natural image, and, if they be regenerate, as they bear his holy image too. And the case may be so, that the suffering of our flesh is necessary for the advantage of our spirits. Our flesh may suffer so, as that the spirit shall be the better for it; and then pity itself, compassion itself, must not only permit, but cause and produce such a course of dispensation, as whereby that end shall be attained, the making us partakers of his holiness. So the apostle speaks of his own case; Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16. Though our outward man perish. We are compassed about with deaths, that are continually beating down the walls of this outward man, they are beating upon it, and are likely to infer its perishing; and if it perish, let it perish, I am not solicitous (*q. d.*) about that. If it must come down, let it come down; in the midst of all these outward assaults, our inward man is renewed day by day, gathers a fresh and increasing strength and vigour, whilst this outward man is tending to dissolution and dust. And several ways such continued afflictions, upon the outward man, may make for the advantage of the inward man, in the best kind.

[1.] As they withdraw, and take off the mind and heart from this world, a debasing and defiling thing; and which transforms the soul, that converses too much with it, into a dunghill, fills it with ill savour. But what doth all this world signify to a sickly, pained person?

[2.] As it engages them to be much in prayer. Nothing is more suitable, than that an afflicted life be a life of much prayer. Is any man afflicted, let him pray, Jam. v. 13. Much affliction hath a natural aptitude to incline men this way. In their affliction they will seek me early, Hos. v. 15. It is a dictate of nature, even when grace, as yet, hath no possession; but which through God's blessing, may, by this means, help to introduce it. For it urges the soul Godward, who is the God of all grace: obliges it to converse with him, whereby somewhat better may be gained than is sought. In their afflictions they will be submissive and lie at my feet, saith God: they will seek me early, from whom, otherwise, I should never hear, it may be, all their life long. Oh! that you would understand the matter so, when God afflicts in such kinds, so as his hand touches your very bone and flesh; this is the design of it, to make you pray, to bring you upon your knees, to put you into a supplicating posture; if he can, upon any terms, hear from you, though you seek him but for bodily ease and refreshing, it may be a means of the greatest advantage to you, ere God have done with you, when once he has brought you, by this means, to treat; when he has got you into a more tractable disposition, there is hope in the case. If thus he open your ear to discipline, and be to you an interpreter, one of a thousand, to show you his righteousness; he may seal instruction to you, and save your soul from going down to the pit, having found a ransom for you, Job xxxiii. 15, &c.

But for those that have a real interest in God, and union with Christ, that which occasions much prayer, is likely to be the means of much spiritual improvement and advantage to them.

[3.] It puts several suitable graces upon exercise, and by being exercised, they grow. It tries their faith, and improves it. Faith is, in such a case as this, necessarily called forth into act, if there be the principle; and as it acts it grows, and becomes more and more strong, and lively. Their patience is exercised by it, and perfected; and that has a great influence upon their universal perfection. Le

patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect, Jam. i. 2, 3, 4. There will be a universal languor (as if he should have said) upon your spirits, if you be impatient; if you cannot suffer, (as patience is an ability for suffering,) if you can by no means endure, without tempestuous agitations, or sullen despondencies of spirit. But if patience have its perfect work, that will infer a universal healthfulness and good habit into your whole soul.

Their love to God is, in such a case, eminently tried, and improved. Blessed is the man that endures temptation, (tentative affliction is there meant, as above, verse 2.) for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him, (Jam. i. 12.) which implies, their love to him is the great thing put upon trial, in that case. And it is a great trial of love to God, a very improvable opportunity of discerning its sincerity, when, upon a long affliction, you can appeal to God, and say: Thou knowest I love thee; though thou smite and kill, I will still love thee. No discontentful motion, no repining thought, shall ever be allowed a place in my breast; there may be sighs, but no murmurings, groans, but no tumults, nothing of displeasure against thy holy pleasure.

[4.] It occasions such to live much upon the borders of eternity. Under affliction we look not to the things that are seen and temporal; but to the things that are unseen, and eternal; which make us count our affliction, though long, but momentary, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. And those souls will prosper and flourish that have so unspeakably more to do with the other world, than with this. 'Tis in this way that the afflictions of this present state do work for us the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, (ver. 17.) as they direct our eye forward, while we look, (verse 18.) not to the things which are seen, which are but temporal; but to the things which are unseen, and eternal. Life and spirit, strength and vigour enter (*q. d.*) at our eye, which is prompted by the horror of frightful spectacles in this scene of things, to look to another, where all things appear lightsome, pleasant, and glorious.

There are other considerations, whereby you might argue to yourselves not only the consistency, but the suitableness, of an afflicted state in this world, with God's favour, kindness, and compassion towards you. As that when he is more highly provoked, he threatens not to afflict, as the heaviest of penalties. Why should they be smitten any more? Isa. i. 5. I will no more punish your daughters, &c. Hos. iv. 14. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone, ver. 17. That his covenant obliges him to it, as to them who are, on stricter terms, in covenant with him, Christ's own seed being signified by David's; as by David is manifestly Christ himself, Psal. lxxxix. Where you may see how, and after what tenor, his covenant runs, ver. 30—34. According whereto he himself elsewhere acknowledges, that in very faithfulness God hath afflicted him, Psal. cxix. 75. That, in experience, we are apt to grow remiss, secure, and negligent, when all things are externally well with us. And let us but appeal to ourselves, how much a wakeful temper of spirit, under affliction, is better than carelessness, and vanity of mind, accompanied with fleshly ease and pleasure; that we can ourselves easily apprehend, that it may not only consist with the tenderness of a parent to have the wound of a child searched, though with much pain; but proceed from it; that in heaven our judgment of things will be right and incorrupt, where we shall apprehend no cause for complaint, that through many sicknesses, diseases, and death itself, our way was made for us thither. And if that shall then be a true judgment, the thing itself must be as true now. But these I hastily hint, and pass to some further use.

2. We may next collect, that since it is out of doubt the devil may have some hand in our outward affliction; we are concerned to take so much the more care, that he may not have his end upon us by it. A hand he may have, and we cannot determine how far; but whether it be more or less, great care we are concerned to take how to frustrate his design. He has the most mischievous ends that can be, and designs worse things to us than the affliction, which is the means, whatsoever that be. He would fain engage us in a controversy with God, would have us contend with him, murmur, fret, blaspheme, and curse God; and therewith send out our last and dying breath. That was his design upon Job. Let us labour to frustrate it, as he did. Divers of the ancients (Justin Martyr, Jerome, Cyprian, and Austin) speak much to this purpose, how great a design the devil drives in being the author of sicknesses and diseases to men, that he might make them apply themselves to him, and divert from God; as that wicked prince did, whom by the prophet we find so sharply reproved for it, as if there were no God in Israel, that he went to the god of Ekron (some demon or other, as we have reason to think.) The last mentioned of those authors speaks of it as just matter of excommunication, when those that bear the name of Christians shall, in such cases, use means bearing no natural proportion or accommodateness to the end, charms, spells, &c. for ease, or cure of maladies; wherein no relief could reasonably be expected, but from the devil's agency, who may be officious enough, if especially he have first hurt, to heal too, that by practising upon their bodies, he may entangle their souls; and (according to his wont of running counter to God, who wounds that he may the more effectually heal and save) by a present temporary cure, wound mortally, and finally destroy.

He hath not left the world (no not the Christian world) quite ignorant of his methods in these kinds, of training men, by gradual steps, into things, first, that seem innocent, and then into such familiarities, (whether their real distress, or their curiosity, were the first handle he took hold of them by, or the engine by which he drew them,) till, at length, it comes to express covenanting. If the matter come not so far, 'tis rare to come off from the least tamperings without a scratch. He that is born of God, keeps himself, that the evil one may not touch him, (1 John v. 18.) as knowing he designs to touch mortally, and if he touch, to kill. If it proceed so far as a solemn league, how tragical consequences doth story abound with! That of Count Matiscon, (plucked away by the devil from among divers persons of quality, whom he was entertaining, and at noonday whirled in the air three times about the city, in open view of the people, to whom he in vain cried for help,) reported by some historians; and that of an infamous magician of Saltzburg, and divers others, are instances both very extraordinary and very monitory. But as to a future ruin, which he finally aims to involve men in, with himself; he hath not faster hold of any than those that have learnt to ridicule every thing of this kind, and who have put so much sadducism into their creed, (consisting of so many negatives, or things they believe not, that they scarce leave enough positive to admit that name,) as to think there is no such creature, perhaps as being conscious there can be no worse than themselves. But how near is he to them that think him out of the universe!

3. Since it is possible the devil may bind even those that belong to God, with some kind of bodily affliction or other; it is the more to be apprehended, how much worse bonds they are, in which he binds those that do not belong to him. Oh! that you would be serious here! How many such sad cases are there, amongst even them as may be feared that are called Christians, concerning which it may be said, here is a soul that Satan hath bound, not eighteen, but it may be, thirty, forty, fifty years! Oh! when shall this soul be released, that Satan hath so long bound!

4. As from the devil's malice to the bodies of men, we may collect his greater malice to their souls; so we may judge proportionably of Christ's compassions, that as they incline him to give them all suitable relief in their bodily afflictions, as far as can consist with those measures which infinite wisdom hath pitched upon for the government of this present world, and as shall fall in with the design of his office of a Redeemer and Saviour to us; so they much more incline him to relieve embondaged souls. For this doth most directly fall in with his design, and is the proper business of his office; the other may be only collateral to it, and as it were to be done on the by. He came not into this world to procure that men might not be sick, or pained, or be presently restored to health, and ease; but he came and died, that souls might live; to procure for them pardon, reconciliation with God, all needful assisting influences of grace, and eternal life. Of these therefore they

may be most assured, if they duly apply themselves. And some encouragement to expect so much they may draw, even from this instance. This infirm woman, in order to bodily cure, did apply herself to him, she came after him, as others did, for this purpose, and did, in a sort, put herself in the way of his healing influence. Now if any of you find your souls are yet held by the devil, in worse bonds; apply yourselves to the merciful compassionate Jesus, there is hope in the case. Oh! will you not say so much to him for a soul in bondage! Lord, loose this poor soul of mine, that Satan hath bound for so many sad years. Do but labour to know you are bound, to feel your bonds. Whatsoever there is of prevailing sin in you, it is a bond, by which the devil holds your souls. The wicked are held in the cords of their own iniquities, Prov. v. 22. And sins are said to be the works of Satan, from which it is the design of the Redeemer to loose us. The Son of God was for this purpose manifested, that he might destroy (we read, it is that he might dissolve) the works of the devil, *q. d.* that he might release, and unbind souls, that the devil as yet holds in fast bonds. And you may find you are so bound, when upon self-reflection you take notice, you are ordinarily restrained from what you should do, against the light and conviction of your own minds and judgments; *i. e.* you find, if you reflect, a conviction hath taken place in your consciences that you ought to love God, but there is with you no such motion of soul, no inclination towards him; you ought in a stated course, to pray, and pour out your soul to him, but you are bound, you cannot offer at it, you have no liberty for it, your terrene inclination, or love to vanity, plucks you back: you ought to walk in the ways of God, but you are fettered, you cannot move a foot; you ought to do the works of God, but you are manacled, you cannot stir a hand. Are you so bound, and will you not know it? What! never feel your bonds; when once they are felt, you will soon begin to cry, and supplicate. And if once you shall be brought seriously and incessantly to supplicate, it may be hoped the release will follow. Was our Lord so compassionate towards infirm bodies, in the days of his flesh in this world; and do we think he, above, is less compassionate to souls? Can it be thought heaven hath altered him to your disadvantage? Is he less kind, benign, and less apt to do good, now he is enthroned in glory? Why should you not believe he will give release unto your captived, embondaged souls, if you implore his help and mercy, with seriousness, and insist upon it, and do not give him over? Say to him, Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me; for do you not know it is his office? The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and opening of prisons to them that are bound, Isa. lxi. 1. What! will you be bound all your days, and never lift up a cry to the great Redeemer and Saviour of souls, to give you release? How deservedly should these bonds end with you in the chains, wherein the devils themselves shall for ever be bound with you?

5. We may collect, there is an awful regard due to the sabbath-day. When our Lord justifies the cure now wrought on their sabbath, only on this account, that it was an act of mercy towards a daughter of Abraham; by the exception of such a case he strengthens the general rule, and intimates so holy a day should not, upon light occasions, be otherwise employed, than for the proper end of its appointment. Though our day be not the same, the business of it, in great part, is; by the reason given in the fourth commandment, which being placed among the rest of those ten words, so many ways remarkably distinguished from the other laws given the Jews, and signifying that these were intended not to them alone, but to mankind, and given upon a reason common to man; the words also not necessarily signifying more, than there should be a seventh day kept as sacred to God, reserving it to after-significations of his pleasure to mark out and signalize this or that day, as he should see fit. And our Saviour having told us expressly, The sabbath was made for man (*i. e.* as men, not for Jews, as Jews.) These considerations taken together, with many more, (not fit to be here mentioned,) do challenge a very great regard to the day, which we have cause to think it is the will of God we should keep as our sabbath.

6. That there is somewhat of privilege due, by gracious vouchsafement and grant, to the children of Abraham, to Abraham's seed, *i. e.* to speak by analogy, to the children of covenanted parents. Abraham is considerable here, as being, under that notion, a father; whosoever of you, therefore, are the children of such, as were of the faith of Abraham, and you are now come to that adult state, wherein you are capable of transacting with God for yourselves, and wherein the *transitus* is made from minority to maturity; if now you own the God of your fathers, if you will now say, My fathers' God shall be my God; he keeps mercy for thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments, *i. e.* if there were a thousand generations of such, (generations being spoken of so immediately before, *viz.* that he would visit iniquity upon them that hate him, to the third and fourth generation; but show mercy to them that love him, and keep his commandments, unto a thousand generations, *i. e.* to never so many,) if you will not, when now grown up, disavow your fathers' God, if you will avow and own him, and devote yourselves to him; he will be your God, as well as theirs. Here is now the privilege due to Abraham's children, or to the children of covenanted parents. God has an early preventive interest in them, upon which they may lay their claim to him, as their God; if they will but now give up themselves to him, and stand to his covenant. But if you will not do so, but slight and reject the God of your fathers, then your birth-privilege can signify nothing to you; then think not to say with yourselves, We have Abraham to our father, in that third of Matthew's Gospel; for God will never want children, he is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham, *q. d.* rather stones than you. And then, indeed, upon a true account, Abraham is none of your father, as our Lord Jesus tells the Jews, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. You do so and so, thus did not Abraham, John viii. 39, 40. Pray consider what Abraham was, and how he lived on earth, like an inhabitant of heaven, as an heir of the heavenly country: his business was to seek the better country, that is, the heavenly; wherefore God was not ashamed to be called his God; as in that eleventh to the Heb. ver. 16. But if you will go from day to day grovelling in the dust of the earth, this did not Abraham. If you will spend your lives in the pursuit of vanity and trifles, this did not Abraham. There is a great privilege belonging by Gospel grant unto the children of covenanted parents, if they do not forfeit it, by neglecting and practically disavowing their fathers' God.

7. But I further infer hence, that since this compassion has a real, though not a principal, hand in the release that is given to them that belong to God, in whatsoever way they are released, from all their infirmities, and ails, and afflictions in this world; it very much becomes, and much concerns, all the children of Abraham patiently to wait for it, in God's own way. Patiently, I say, in God's own way wait for it. The children of Abraham shall be loosened sooner or later, and in one way or other, though very long, though so many years bound by such and such afflicting distempers. You have a great instance of this kind in that daughter of Abraham, whom God hath called away from us. In all that long exercise, the main thing she was ever wont to insist upon, was, that in all this affliction she might gain patience, submission, and instruction. And in her later time, when she drew nearer to eternity, was more in view of it, that was the great subject wherewith she entertained herself, and was conversant much with somewhat more lately written upon that subject, as by Mr. Shower, (now known to most of you,) and by another author. And her last entertainment, as I have been told, (as to helps from creatures in any such kind,) was the repetition of what some of you have heard concerning the Immanuel, wherewith she formerly pleased herself, as being, it is likely, much habituated in the temper of her spirit to the thoughts of him: that having, by agreement with her pious consort, been their motto,* at their first coming together, Immanuel, God with us.

8. I shall only add one instruction more, to shut up all, that since our Lord Jesus hath such an agency, and even with compassion, in the release of those that do belong to him, from their afflicting infirmities; we should all of us labour with a due and right frame, and disposition of spirit,

* The posy on their wedding ring.

to behold any such releasement. It is a great matter to be able to behold instances of that kind, with a right frame of mind and spirit. If one be released by recovery into ease, health, and strength in this world; 'tis easily and readily made matter of joy. Is one recovered out of a long and languishing sickness? Friends and relations behold it with great complacency and gladness of heart. But if a godly friend be released by dying, truly we can hardly make ourselves believe that this is a release, or so valuable a release; so much are we under the government of sense, so little doth that faith signify with us, or do its part, that is the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we see not. No! This is to go with us for no release. We look only upon the sensible, *i. e.* upon the gloomy, part of such a dispensation, when such a one is gone, released, set at liberty, (as a bird out of the cage, or the snare,) we can hardly tell how to consider it as a release, we will not be induced to apprehend it so. There are no dispositions, no deportments commonly that suit such an apprehension. And oh! how unbecoming and incongruous a thing, when Christ is, in that way, about releasing such a one, to have a holy soul just upon the confines of a glorious blessed eternity, compassed about with sighs, sobs, tears, and lamentations. How great an incongruity! I have many times thought with myself, the love and kindness of friends and relations is very pleasant in life, but grievous at death. It is, indeed, in some respects, a very desirable thing (if God shall vouchsafe it) to die with one's friends about one. It may be, one may need some little bodily relief in those last hours; besides that, some proper thoughts may be suggested by them, to mingle with one's own: And, if God afford the use of reason, and speech, and the supply of his own Spirit, one may possibly, in this last juncture, be a means of some good to them. One may possibly say that that may abide with them, and be of future advantage to them. But in other respects, if the related friendly by-standers cannot duly temper themselves, if they are apter to receive or do more hurt than good, if Christians do not labour to show a truly Christian spirit, in such a case; their presence has very little eligible in it. And, indeed, the deportment even of those that profess Christianity, about their deceasing godly friends, is such for the most part, as if the foundations of all religion were shaken with them, and as if they had a design to shake them too, if possible, in such with whom they are now to part; as if it were to be called in question, whether what God hath said concerning another world, and the blessed state of the innumerable and holy assembly above, be true or no, or were not doubted to be false, and a solemn fiction, invented to delude mortals here on earth.

It is little considered how opposite such a temper of spirit, as commonly appears in us, is to the very design of all Christianity. For doth not the whole of Christianity terminate upon eternity, and upon another state and world? Now do but consider the inconsistencies that are to be found in this case, between the carriage and temper of many that profess Christianity, and their very profession itself. They acknowledge, they own that the design of Christ's appearing here in this world, and of his dying upon the cross, was to bring us to God, to bring the many sons to glory. They grant that this is not to be done all at once, not all in a day; but it is to be done by degrees. Here he takes up one, and there another; leaving others still to transmit religion, and continue it on to the end of time. So far they agree with our common Lord, and seem to approve the divine determinations, in all these steps of his procedure. But yet for all this, if they might have their own will, Christ should not have one to ascend to him, of those for whom he died, and himself ascended to open heaven for them, and to prepare a place for their reception, as their fore-runner, there. I say, not one to ascend after him! for they take up with a general approving of this design of his. Very well! say they, it is fitly ordered, his method is wise, and just, and kind, and let him take them that belong to him, when he thinks fit, only let him excuse my family; let him take whom he will, only let him touch no relation of mine, not my husband, wife, child, brother, sister; take whom he will, but let all mine alone. I agree to all he shall do well enough, only let him allow me my exception. But if every one be of this temper and resolution, for themselves and theirs, according to this tendency and course of things, he shall have none at all to ascend; none to bring with him, when he returns. Those that are dead in Jesus, he is to bring with him. No, he should be solitary and unattended for all them. They, and all their relations, would be immortal upon earth. How ill doth this agree and accord with the Christian scheme and model of things?

But you will say, What! would I persuade you to be indifferent, and not to love and care for your relatives, or be unwilling to part with them? No. All that I persuade to is, that there be a mixture in your temper, and such a mixture, as that the prevailing ingredient therein may agree with the stronger and weightier reason. 'Tis not that I would have love extinguished among relatives, but I would have it moderated and subdued, to that degree as to admit of being governed by superior, greater, and nobler considerations. Do you think Christ did expect or design that his disciples should not love him? And yet he tells them, John xiv. 28. If you love me, you would rejoice that I say I go to my Father. And who in all this world could ever have such a loss, as they of him, dwelling in flesh among them? Yet, says he, if you loved me, you would rejoice that I say I go to my Father. And when the apostle, visibly tending towards death, by the prediction given concerning him, (Acts xxi. 13.) said to the disciples round about him, What mean you to weep, and to break my heart? I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the name of Jesus; if there had not been a faulty excess in the affection they expressed, certainly he would not have rebuked it, he would not have blamed what he thought not blame-worthy.

In short, it were desirable (if God see good) to die amidst the pleasant friends and relatives, who were not ill-pleased that we lived; that living, and dying, breath might mingle, and ascend together in prayers and praises to the blessed Lord of heaven and earth, the God of our lives; if then we could part with consent, a rational and a joyful consent.

Otherwise, to die with ceremony, to die amongst the fashionable bemoanings and lamentations, as if we despaired of futurity! One would say, (with humble submission to the Divine pleasure,) Lord! let me rather die alone! in perfect solitude! in some unfrequented wood, or on the top of some far remote mountain! where none might interrupt the solemn transactions between thy glorious blessed self, and my joyfully departing, self-resigning soul!

But in all this we must refer ourselves to God's holy pleasure, who will dispose of us, living and dying, in the best, the wisest, and the kindest way.

A DISCOURSE

RELATING TO THE MUCH LAMENTED DEATH AND SOLEMN FUNERAL

OF QUEEN MARY.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE RACHEL, LADY RUSSEL.

MADAM,

I CAN be at no loss for inducements to prefix your Ladyship's name to this discourse. I know the subject is grateful to you, and if I only give you the occasion hereby of revolving in your mind this sublime context, you will entertain yourself from it, with more enlarged and exalted thoughts, than this discourse, especially confined within so narrow limits, can suggest.

And your Ladyship knows so much of the incomparable queen, that you can the more easily believe the rest. I reckon you, Madam, a great frequenter of that assembly above, to which she is now adjoined. You have, besides the greater attractives that are common to all serious Christians, a very peculiar one, to draw your mind often thither. A joint-root with you is there by transplantation, and a noble branch, from you both, and in whom two illustrious families meet, is, under your care, shooting upwards also. All indeed that have true honour for him, will earnestly covet he may be long serviceable to the most valuable purposes, in this world; and that, by the blessing of heaven upon his approaching nuptials, (with one from whom may be expected all that so sweet and tender a bud, now beginning to open, can promise,) he may, in due time, spread forth many branches, that may flourish here; but it is to be hoped he will be found to have a greater mind, than can be confined to so low and little a thing as this earth is.

The thought may much the better be digested, that terrestrial nuptials will some time end in funerals; if once, by God's prescribed methods, it can be made certain to us also, that those funerals shall end in celestial triumphs.

Your Ladyship's eyes (which better serve for heaven than earth) being observedly much directed upward, will give aim and direction to theirs, who depend upon you, to look the same way; and withal draw down from thence continual blessings upon yourself, and them. Which is the serious desire, and hope of,

Madam,

Your Ladyship's most obedient,
and obliged humble servant,

J. H.

HEBREWS XII. 23.

—AND TO THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT.

LET me invite back your eye to the foregoing words, that are in nearer connexion with these. Ver. 22. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, (ver. 23.) to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

We have had this last week a public solemnity, that was becomingly great and magnificent, upon a sad and mournful occasion, the last act of a doleful scene that hath lasted many weeks. You know I have taken notice to you (my usual hearers) of the first, and saddest, the leading part in this tragedy, once and again; nor would I have this last to pass us, without some instructive observation and remark. It will the more instruct us, the less it detains us; or if only taking a due (not, I mean, a slight and too hasty, but yet a transient) notice of it, we be prompted by it to look forward, from what was in its own kind most deservedly great, to what is incomparably greater, in a more excellent kind.

In such a funeral solemnity, for so great and excellent a personage, there is what may most fitly entertain awhile; there is not that which ought finally to terminate a wise and a judicious eye. Honours done to the memory of great persons deceased have, by the wisdom of all nations, been counted decencies, and even debts; when especially the deceased have been sometime, and might have been much longer, public blessings: then indeed it is that such rites are most fitly (as they are usually) called *justa*. But we are too prone to be taken only with the mere pomp of such spectacles, and, which is the infirmity of our too degenerate spirits, to be wholly possessed with fanciful ideas; Acts xxv. 23. as those were intimated to be, which were from a spectacle of the same common kind, though on a very diverse occasion, by that elegant expression, μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας, such as do but amuse our imagination awhile, but must of course vanish, and cannot stay long with us. But we need that somewhat greater, and too latent to strike our eye, should another way enter, and teach our mind; making such impressions there, as may claim an abode, and that ought to remain, and dwell with us. You read of a very solemn funeral, Gen. 1. The whole country into which the march was made, was amused at the state and greatness of that mournful cavalcade, wherein 'tis said, ver. 9. there were chariots, and horsemen, even a very great company. That which you have many of you so lately seen, and no doubt all of you heard of,

was a most august funeral solemnity; such as whereof less concerned foreign spectators might say, as the Canaanites by mistake did of that, ver. 11. This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians.

They were indeed anciently the most celebrated mourners, for such as died from amongst them, in all the world, in respect of their funeral rites, and of their monuments for the dead,[a] of which they are said to have taken more care than of the habitations of the living; accounting these they were to inhabit only a short time, but those they reckoned their κοῖραι ἀεί, their *eternal habitations*. An imagination, which how wild soever it were, of the habitations of souls, (which only could be supposed capable of being pleased with them,) yet implied their belief of their immortality, whereof some have, groundlessly, thought them the first assertors.[b] But the Canaanites were, as was intimated, mistaken in apprehending that to be chiefly an Egyptian mourning. The true Israelites (those that were such indeed) were the true, concerned mourners. The father of Israel was dead, as now with us, the mother. A political, though not a natural, nor merely an economical one: a mother, not in the narrower and more minute, but in the larger and most noble sense; not of a single family only, but of nations. The Egyptians assisted to make up the show in that mourning, but were probably the prepared (as their posterity were the active) instruments of the slavery and misery of that people; with whom they were now seeming sharers in lamentation.

Ours was a mourning not less grievous than theirs, nor more grievous than just to the English nation, *i. e.* to whom the soil and the genius are together native, that are not of an Egyptian spirit. Unto which, as things happen, (to its power, or to its impotency,) there is a radical innate disposition, either to make slaves, or to be such. There is a sort of people (as was once said) born to slavery, to whom it is a birthright. They have it in their natures, and no other state, as he most aptly spake, is agreeable or becoming to them; [c]*Quos non decet esse nisi servos.* They know not what to do with liberty, any more than that silly creature that used to haunt the dunghill, with the pearl. Therefore they can but suitably value the restorers and assertors of it. No irons can be heavier, or less tolerable to them, than a generous and a Christian state of freedom. Therefore if none else will do them the kind office to put them into gentler shackles, they grow so unnaturally cruel, as to shackle themselves, in the ignoblest sort of bondage. Prov. v. 22. They are held in the cords of their own sins, and make the chain, whereby they are to be dragged.[d] Brutish appetites and inclinations are to them severer taskmasters, than it can ever be in their power to become to others. They can themselves, at the utmost, but domineer over other men's externals; but these have subdued their wills, and tyrannize in their very minds.

Thus 'tis with them in relation to their governing, and their being governed; and their policy and religion come both out of the same mint. To them this season of sorrow is a time of festivity and laughter, who, when they have suffered a more monstrous transformation themselves, can easily turn the house of mourning into that of mirth, Eccl. vii. 4. The wise man tells us what sort of people they are, whose heart is in this latter house; and what is to be thought of such mirth and laughter, chap. ii. 2. And indeed without a serious repentance (by which men do *resipiscere*, or *become wise*) theirs is like to prove the Sardonic laughter, a certain prelude to death and ruin.

But 'tis to be hoped, this sort of men do dwindle into a not much regardable paucity. The current of the nation runs against them, which must turn and constrain them to fall in with it. For, we had upon the late sad occasion a *panegyris*. We find that word in the introductive part of the text, and though it is more commonly applied to a multitude, gathered on other occasions, it disagrees not to that orderly great concourse on that mournful occasion, a general assembly, that is, a national one, met then on purpose to mourn; a nation assembled, and mourning in their representative. It was decent it should be so, a loss so national, so general a sorrow were with no congruity otherwise to be represented and expressed. Our mourning was therefore by all the estates of the kingdom, the head only mourning, with greater and more decent majesty in retirement, or being (as is usual in solemn mournings) hid and covered on that day. So was the whole legislature concerned in that sorrow, as if it were ordained by statute, or as if our mourning were as that for an excellent prince also (2 Chron. xxxv. 25.) by an ordinance in our Israel; and as if our tears and lamentations were, as before they were by merit, to be also made due by law! Death marched in state and triumph that day, the king of terrors took the throne, and filled that part which it had made vacant, having plucked away from thence not only so bright an ornament, but so glorious an instrument, in our government; and all the orders of the realm, as captives, attended the chariot of the conqueror. England had lost its delight, its pleasant comeliness, and even half its soul. Nothing could correspond to such a case, but a national groan, as of a half-expiring kingdom, ready almost to breathe its last, and give up the ghost.

It must be confessed, our just tribute to the memory of our admirable queen can never be said to be fully paid; nor can this discourse leave out occasional reflections that may be of this import. But my present design is to endeavour our minds may be drawn upwards, and to make that improvement of this most instructive providence, unto which this chosen text will direct. Not to entertain you with her character, and praises (for it is the same thing to characterize, and to praise her:) that part is performed in divers excellent discourses, which I have read, as I believe many of you have, and I hope with fruit as well as approbation; and (as there is cause) with great admiration of the Divine goodness, that so illustriously shone forth in her, and that vouchsafed, so long, to intrust the people of England with so rare a jewel, whose lustre was yet exceeded by its real virtues. By which also we may make our estimate of the displeasure wherewith it is so soon withdrawn, and caught away from us, so as to entertain the age (as our divine Herbert) with—*a mirth but opened, and shut up again*—a burning and a shining light, (for so she also was in a true sense, and in her proper sphere,) in the light whereof we rejoiced but a season.

But every such providence hath its dark side and its bright. View it downward as it looks upon us who remain beneath, and we behold blackness, and darkness, and a horrible tempest. Such a state of things we may fear our queen hath left unto us who stay below, while we do so. But look we upon it upwards, whither she is ascended, and whither we are professedly tending, and are in some sort come, if we be followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises; and we find 'tis to mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And hither (that we may fetch instruction out of terror, out of the eater meat, and life out of death) let us bend and apply ourselves.

We have had a mournful sad solemnity and assembly, though decently pompous and great; England's glory clad in sables, and glittering in a cloud. But now let us lift up our eye, and endeavour it may penetrate through this darkness, and behold the glorious spectacle which this context presents us with. Funeral solemnities, even for pious and holy persons, and that were of greatest use in the world, are dull and gloomy spectacles, if they are only considered in their retrospection, without prospect; or if they only solemnize their exit out of this world of ours, but be understood to have no reference to their ascent and entrance into the regions of immortality and bliss above. And, without this, we see ourselves outdone by the Egyptians themselves, with whom their funeral apparatus had reference to a subsequent immortality.

These words are allusive, and promiscuously refer, partly to things known and famous among the Greeks, but are more principally accommodated to these Christian Israelites, or Hebrews, to whom they are writ (and in a scheme of speech, familiar and well known to them) have respect to their passage out of Egypt (as the 3d and 4th chapters of this epistle also have) towards the land of their promised

a Diod. Sic. i. 1. b Herpd. Enterp. c Plin. Paneg. d Sen. Trag.

inheritance, whereof the remains of their venerable ancestor and head, holy Jacob, or Israel, had by divine instinct and direction, in that mentioned solemn funeral procession, been conveyed before, to take a sort of typical and prophetical prepossession of it for them. They are in the whole a figure, an allegory, which is expounded, Gal. iii. In their way to their terrestrial Canaan, this people come to mount Sinai. The emblem of their Jewish church state, under rigorous severities, which they were to pass from; and so shall we. The text expresses what they were come and were tending to, the representation whereof hath a double reference, intermediate to the state and constitution of the Christian church, and final to the heavenly state; the former being both a resemblance and some degree of the latter.

Ye are come (saith he) to mount Sion, the seat of the sacred temple, the shechinah, the habitation of the Divine presence, not ambulatory, as the tabernacle was, while they were journeying through the wilderness, but the fixed residence of the eternal King, where the order of worship was to be continued, to the fulness of time; as afterwards in the Christian church it was to be permanent and unchanged to the end of time; and in the heavenly state unalterable and eternal. And here, in opposition to the case at mount Sinai, where the people were to stay beneath the mount,[e] (whereas they were to go up to the house of God, on mount Sion,) they are now to ascend, *and be higher than heaven*, as their glorious Head and Lord is said to be, Heb. vii. 26. to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to signify the vicinity wherein God will have his people be to him, as Jerusalem was to Sion, their houses and dwellings being near to his own, the city to the temple.[f] And this passage may also look back upon their former state; whereas they had heretofore nothing but wilderness, they had now a city. To which that also agrees, Heb. x. 16. Their earlier progenitors were wanderers and strangers even in Canaan itself, but now God had prepared for them a city in the heavenly Canaan, as before he did in the earthly. But lest their minds should stay in the external sign, he lets them know he means the heavenly Jerusalem, *i. e.* the Christian church, which was the kingdom of heaven begun; and heaven itself, as being that kingdom, in its final and consummate state. To an innumerable company of angels, μυριάσι, which, though in the singular it signifies a definite number, being here put plurally, may well be understood to signify indefinitely a numberless multitude: or whereas some selected squadrons might only attend the solemnity of giving the law at mount Sinai, here is the whole heavenly host; whose stated office it is to guard the church below, and worship the Majesty of heaven above. To the general assembly, the πανήγυρις the glorious *consessus* of all orders of blessed spirits; which as it may be supposed constant, at all times, so is as supposable to be more frequented and solemn at some, and whither any may resort, as quick as the glance of an eye or a thought; and perhaps do at appointed seasons, so as to make more solemn appearances before the throne of God, as the laws and usages of that blessed world shall require. And we may well understand here an allusion to the appointed times, at which there was a resort from all parts of Judea to Jerusalem; and as in the Christian church are, at set seasons, more numerous and solemn assemblies. Here may also be an allusion to the *Panathenaica*, the more general conventions of all the people of Athens, upon some solemn occasions, which were wont to be called πανήγυρεις. These can be referred to but as faint resemblances and shadows (whether they were the Jewish or the Grecian assemblies) of this universal convention, that fills the vast expanse of heaven; in comparison whereof not only this little earth of ours, but the whole *vortice* to which it belongs, can be considered but as a very minute spot or point. The inhabitants that people those immense, pure, and bright regions, in their grand, stated, solemn assembly, make the term to which holy souls, ascending from among us, are continually coming. And here with what ineffable pleasure must these pure celestial intelligences, all filled with light, wisdom, life, benignity, love, and joy, converse with one another; behold, reverence, love, worship, and enjoy their sovereign Lord, displaying his glory perpetually before them, and making his rich immense goodness diffuse itself, and flow in rivers of pleasure most copiously among them!

The church of the first-born written in heaven. These all constitute but one church, of whatsoever orders those blessed spirits are. And they are all said to be first-born, the church here meant consisting only of such, in whom the divine life, or the holy living image of God, hath place; they having all the privileges which did belong to the first-born, the inheritance, the principality, and the priesthood: for all God's sons are also heirs, Rom. viii. 17. And they are all made kings and priests, (Rev. i. 6.) having all their crowns, which they often cast down before the supreme King; and their employment being perpetual oblation of praise, adoration, and all possible acknowledgments to him. They are all of excellent dignity, and every one enrolled so that none have a place there, by oversight, casualty, or intrusion. We must here understand an allusion to what citizens need not be told, the known custom of registering such as were *civitate donati*, or *made free*.

And to God the Judge of all. This may have reference to that office of the judge in the olympic concertations, to whom it belonged to determine who were victors, and to whom the garlands or crowns were justly due. Here the privilege is, that they whose cause is to be tried, are sure of righteous judgment, and that they may approach the enthroned Majesty of heaven itself. None of them are denied liberty of access to the throne of glory above, as in the Christian church none are to the throne of grace below.

And to the spirits of just men made perfect. This shows they all make but one church, even such spirits as have dwelt in flesh, being received into the communion of those whose dwelling never was with flesh. And, in the mean time, those that yet continue in these low earthly stations, as soon as the principles of the divine life have place in them, belong, and are related, to that glorious community; for they are said to be already come thereto, and all together compose but one family. For there is but one *paterfamilias*, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is said to be named, Ephes. iii. 15. Now for the encouragement of Christians unto a faithful perseverance, through all the difficulties of this their present conflicting, imperfect state, is this glorious representation made of the blessed issue their labours and sufferings shall have at last. Whither they shall be gathered at the finishing of their course, and how God-like, how worthy of himself, the end shall be, into which he will run up all things, when the state of probation and preparation is over with his intelligent creatures, and the stable, permanent, eternal state comes to take place; which, because it is final, can admit no more changes, and because it is perfect, can no more need any. Hither Christians are to come, and in some sense the sincere are said to be come already. And now upon this part of the term of their access, *viz.* that they are come to "the spirits of the just made perfect," we are to stay awhile, and shall consider,

I. The perfection the spirits of the just do finally arrive to, in their future state.

II. In what sense sincere Christians, in their present state, can be said to be come to them, who are so made perfect.

I. For the former of these, we may easily admit this being made perfect to be an agonistical phrase, as some of great note and worth have expounded it; and unto which that in the beginning of this chapter, of running the race set before us, (*q. d.* the way laid out between the lines on each hand,) doth plainly lead us. But if should hereupon be remote from us to think, that a mere relative dignity, or any external honours, are the things we must principally understand to be conferred, or which these *adepti* must be now thought to have obtained. 'Tis a real, inward, subjective perfection, by which they all become most excellent creatures, that must be chiefly meant. Perfection, taken in the moral sense, doth, in the language of the Holy Scriptures, contain a threefold gradation.

First, At the lowest, sincerity; as when our Saviour proposes to that querist, Matt. xix. 21. If he would be perfect, to sell all he had, and give to the poor, following him, with the expectation of no other recompense but of a trea-

e Ἀνωτεροι του ουρανου. Chrys. in loc.

f Ἔχει ἐρημος συνανθα πολις. Id. ibid.

sure in heaven. If a man's soul be not in a disposition to comport with such terms, upon a sufficient signification of our Lord's pleasure, that he shall now do so; or if at any time this be the case, that he must either forego all this world, and even life itself, or else renounce Christ and Christianity; he is not yet in a right posture toward his last end. He hath not taken the Lord for his God, and best good; his heart more strongly adheres to this present world. But if he have arrived hither, which is his first step, resolving upon his true and right end, which he will supremely pursue, against whatsoever competition of less valuable things; he is now, in the lowest sense, perfect, *i. e.* a resolved, thorough Christian.

Secondly, An eminent improvement, greater maturity in divine knowledge, and all other Christian virtues. As when the apostle, blaming the slower progress of the Christian Hebrews, chap. v. 13, 14, that they were yet so unskilful in the word of righteousness, and only capable of milk, not the strong meat fit for persons come to a more grown age, nor had their senses as yet well exercised, &c. he exhorts them, chap. vi. 1. leaving the first principles of the Christian doctrine, to go on to perfection.

The third is the consummate state of a Christian; so is a perfect man expounded by being come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That state, to which all gifts given by our ascended, conquering, crowned Redeemer; the whole Gospel, the apostolate, the entire ministry, the whole frame and constitution of the Christian church, all evangelical truths and institutions, with whatsoever illuminations and influences we can suppose superadded to all these, have ultimate and final reference. And the state to which all shall come, (Eph. iv. 8—13.) is this most perfect state, in respect whereof the apostle says of himself, that he had not yet attained, nor was already perfect, Phil. iii. 12. I do not reckon the mere natural perfection, either of the inner or outer man, to be here necessarily excluded; but that the moral is chiefly intended, and of that the ultimate consummative degrees, still reserving room for such additions as will follow the final judgment.

And I doubt 'tis not enough considered, how much the felicity of the future state depends upon such perfection of the subject of it. Concerning the object of felicity, we are agreed it can be no other than the blessed God himself, the all-comprehending good, fully adequate to the highest and most enlarged reasonable desires. But the contemperation of our faculties to the holy, blissful object, is so necessary to our satisfying fruition, that without that we are no more capable thereof, than a brute of the festivities of a quaint oration, or a stone of the relishes of the most pleasant meats and drinks. That meetness, which the apostle speaks of, Col. i. 12. To be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; is of no small importance to our participation itself.

We are too apt to fill our minds with ideas of a heaven made up of external, out-side glories, forgetting we must have the kingdom of God within us, hereafter, in its perfect, as well as here, in its initial state; a kingdom that consists in righteousness, first, a universal holy rectitude of all our powers; then consequently in peace, and joy. The perfect cure of all the distempers of our spirits, and a confirmed most perfectly happy temper, is of most absolute necessity to the blessedness of the heavenly state; and without it any imagined external glory will signify no more to our satisfaction, than rich and gorgeous apparel can give the desired content and ease to an ulcerous diseased body; or (as the moralist speaks) a diadem to an aching head, a gay slipper to a pained foot, or a gold ring to a sore finger.

Let a soul be supposed actually adjoined to that glorious assembly and church above, that is yet unacquainted with God, strange, and disaffected to him, alienated from the divine life, still carnally minded, loving most; and looking back with a lingering eye toward, this present world and state of things, full of pride, haughtiness, and self-magnifying thoughts, of envy, wrath, hatred, contentiousness, deceit, guilefulness, and dissimulation, filled with ravenous lusts, and inordinate, insatiable desires after impossible things; such a soul will only seem to have mistaken its way, place, state, and company, and can only be a fit associate for devils, and infernal spirits. Its condition would be equally uneasy to itself, and all about it; the outrage of its own lusts and passions would create to it a hell, in the midst of heaven, and be to it as a thousand devils, both for wickedness, and for torment.

But to give you a summary of this internal perfection of the spirits of just men, in their most perfect state, I cannot give you a fuller and more comprehensive one than is expressed in those few words, 1 John iii. 3. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Where are two things conjoined, that together express the perfect state of these blessed spirits—likeness to God, and the vision of him.

And these two are so connected, as to admit of a twofold reference each to other; either that this likeness to God be considered as preparative for the vision of him, and so that the latter words be considered as an argument of the former, *viz.* that because it is designed we shall live in the perpetual vision of God, it is therefore necessary we should be like him, without which we can be no way capable of such a sight, or of beholding so bright a glory. Or else, that the vision of God be perpetually productive of this likeness to him; and so that the latter words be understood not only to contain an argument, whence we may conclude this likeness must be, but also to express the immediate cause by which it is. As the form of expression will admit either of these references, so I doubt not the nature of the thing will require that we take them in both. There could be no such vision of God as is here meant, if there were not some previous likeness to him, in our former state. And when, in our final state, we are first admitted to that beatific glorious vision, by that means, we may reasonably understand will ensue the perfection of that likeness. Whereof also it is to be considered, that vision (which spoken of the mind is knowledge) must not only be taken for a cause, but a part; for the image of God is at first renewed (and with equal reason must be supposed at last perfected) in knowledge, Col. iii. 10.

This image or likeness of God therefore, if we consider the natural order of working upon an intelligent subject, must, as to that part of it which hath its seat in the mind or understanding faculty, be caused by the immediate irradiation of the divine light and glory upon that, and be the cause of the rest. But both together are the inherent subjective perfection of these blessed spirits of the just, and comprehend all that belongs to this their moral perfection; the latter being itself also virtually comprehended in the former.

The vision of God therefore, or their perfect knowledge of him, with whom they must ever have most of all to do, as the principal object of their fruition and enjoyment, must be the primary and the leading thing in this their perfection, for no doubt it is that perfection which directly concerns their ultimate satisfaction and blessedness, which is here intended, with which their eternal employment is most conjunct and complicated, as we shall after see. They enjoy and adore the same blessed object at once, and in doing the one, do the other. And besides the knowledge of him there must be by his beams, and in his light, (Psalm xxxvi. 9.) the perfect knowledge of all that it is needful or requisite they should know; without which, since all their enjoyments in the heavenly state must be in their first rise intellectual, 'twould be impossible they should ever perfectly enjoy any thing at all. And that this perfection of just men's spirits is intended to be summarily comprehended in the perfection of their knowledge, is more than intimated, by that series of discourse which we find, 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12. The apostle, comparing the imperfection of our present, with the perfection of our future state, sums up all in this, That we know now but in part, and that then we shall know as we are known. But the perfection of this knowledge he seems more to state in the manner of knowing, than in the extent and compass of the things known. That in this latter respect it may admit of increase, they cannot doubt who consider the finite capacity of a created mind, and the mighty advantages we shall have for continual improvement, both from the clear discovery of things, in that bright and glorious light, and from the receptiveness of our enlarged and most apprehensive minds. But that state can admit of no culpable ignorance, nor of any that shall more infer infelicity, than include sin.

g Plutar.

Therefore now to speak more distinctly, We take this perfection of the spirits of the just to be principally meant of their moral perfection, such as excludes all sin, and all misery; as morality comprehends and connects together sanctity, the goodness of the means, and felicity, the goodness of the end; the former most directly, but most certainly, inferring the latter. If therefore we say this is their sinless perfection, we say all that the case requires. In that it is said to be the perfection of spirits, it must indeed suppose all that natural perfection which belongs to such a sort of creatures, as such, in their own kind. But inasmuch as the specification is added, (of the just,) 'tis their moral perfection, or most perfectly holy rectitude, from which their blessedness is inseparable, that seems ultimately intended. But now whereas this their ultimate perfection hath been said to be virtually contained and summed up in knowledge, we are hereupon to consider how this may appear to be a complete summary of all such perfection. And nothing can more evidently appear, if you join together—the true matter or object, and right manner or nature, of this knowledge.

1. The true and proper object of it must be, not *omne scibile*, but whatsoever they can be obliged or concerned to know, or that is requisite to their duty and felicity; all that lies within their compass, as they are creatures, that in such a distinct sphere, or in their own proper order, are to correspond to the ends of their creation, *i. e.* to glorify the Author of their beings, and be happy in him. Infinite knowledge belongs not to them, is not competent to their nature, nor necessary either to their employment, or to their blessedness, in the heavenly state. Whatsoever knowledge is requisite to these ends, will be included in this their final perfection.

It is, by the way, to be observed how this matter is expressed, made perfect, which signifies our arriving to this perfection out of an imperfect state. We were created with an original perfection, sufficient to a state of probation. By our apostacy we became sinfully imperfect, all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, Rom. iii. 23. We have been put upon a new trial by our Redeemer. Their perfection, who have run out their course, is, by the grace of God, and by his methods, restored, and improved to its just pitch. They are now, their trial being over, set in a consummate rectitude towards the ends of their creation; and herein are endowed with all the knowledge they need, *viz.* of such things as, in reference to those ends, they can any way be concerned with.

With the blessed God himself they are most of all concerned, for him they are eternally to adore and enjoy. Therefore that their perfection should be virtually included in divine knowledge, is congruous to the state of their case, and to the language of the Holy Scriptures; which expresses their most perfect state by the vision of God, in the mentioned 1 John iii. 2. and Matt. v. 8. Heb. xii. 14, &c. Which phrase is not borrowed from the sight of the eye, and transferred to that of the mind, at random, or without (most probable) design. It most aptly signifies the great facility of this knowledge, that it is not toilsome, there is little labour in it, 'tis not such as requires great pains; it is but intuition, not a cautious, wary ratiocination, wherein we use to be very solicitous, lest we draw any irregular or untrue consequences. We do very easily, and on the sudden, without suspicion, or fear of error, only behold what is offered to our view. This is a great perfection of mind with these blessed spirits, to be capable of knowing the greatest things so easily and so soon, to know by seeing. And their aptness hereto is a moral perfection, for the clearness of the discovery infers their greater obligation to attend, and not to divert from what shall cost them so little. The blessed God's manifestation of himself, in that brightest and most glorious light, is not only evidently supposed, for in his light only can we see light, (Psal. xxxvi. 9.) but it is emphatically expressed in the before-mentioned text, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. of seeing face to face; which signifies, on his part, gracious vouchsafement, his offering his blessed face to view, that he hides it not, nor turns it away, as here sometimes he doth, in just displeasure. And his face means even his most conspicuous glory, such as, in this state of mortality, 'twould be mortal to us to behold; for no man, not so divine a man as Moses himself, could see his face and live. And it signifies, on their part who are thus made perfect, their applying and turning their face towards his, *viz.* that they see not casually, or by fortuitous glances, but eye to eye, by direct and most voluntary intuition; which therefore, on their part, implies moral perfection, the will directing and commanding the eye, and upon unexpressible relishes of joy and pleasure forbidding its diversion, holds it steady and intent. Here our ignorance of God is culpable, being voluntary, not liking to retain him in our knowledge, Rom. i. 28. There our knowledge is inculpable and sinless, being chosen, purposed, and always, principally, for its most proper ends, the perfect adoration and fruition of the blessed object we so fixedly behold, and so earnestly covet to know.

'Tis also fit to be noted, that the very fruition of the blessed God itself, which the Holy Scripture includes in our vision of him, is not only our very blessedness itself, but it is our duty too. It is a thing enjoined us, and comprehended in that first and great commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and might, and mind; which who can perfectly do, without a complacential acquiescence, and final rest of their will in him, as the best, the most perfect, and all-comprehending good? And hereupon, though we are wont to distinguish our glorifying God, and enjoying him; they are most manifestly coincident, and but notionally distinct. For in this our fruitive acquiescence of will in him stands our highest veneration, our most practical, most significant acknowledgment and testimony concerning him, as the highest, the most complete, and most absolutely perfect good; in that we seek no further, but take up our final rest in him. This is to give him the proper glory of his Godhead, to glorify him as God. And therefore this being the fullest sense of that great and summary command, it is only a commanding us to be happy. As, on the other hand, the misery of the intelligent creature is his greatest and most injurious iniquity, an aversion of will from the blessed God, a testimony against him as none of the best good, and the greatest indignity which created nature can put upon him, who is goodness itself. Thus then is the knowledge or vision of God, even as it is fruitive, a moral perfection. But the divine knowledge, more at large, of these holy spirits, though it be principally conversant about God, as its noblest object, excludes not their applying their minds to other objects too, according to their concernment with them. And yet,

2. How aptly this perfection is included in such knowledge, will further appear, if you consider the manner of knowing, or the special nature and kind of this vision or knowledge, *viz.* that it is not that slight, ineffectual, merely notional, insipid knowledge, which unregenerate minds are now wont to have of the most evident truths; *viz.* that, for instance, that God is the most excellent, the most perfect, the most desirable, as well as the most adorable good; which knowledge, because it answers not the true end of divine knowledge, is called ignorance; whereupon they are said to be alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, Ephes. iv. 18. But that ignorance is paraphrased by blindness of heart, *i. e.* a most perfectly voluntary and chosen ignorance, founded in aversion of will. And elsewhere, (Jer. ix. 3—6.) by a refusing to know God, a saying to him, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways, Job xxi. 14. Whereupon the light that is in such is said to be very darkness, and then how great is that darkness! Matt. vi. 23.

This knowledge, or vision, now in perfection, is most deeply and inwardly penetrative, efficacious, and transforming, admits a light which spreads and transfuses itself through the whole soul. So it is, at first, in every truly regenerate spirit; whereby such a one is begotten into the Divine likeness, his image is impressed upon it, which, as hath been noted, is said to be renewed in knowledge, Col. iii. 10. So that, as by solemn message to the sons of men, God is declared to be pure light, I John i. 5. This then is the message which we have heard of him; and declare to you, that God is light, and with him is no darkness at all. And as he is the original, the paternal light, the Father of lights, (James i. 17.) so they that are born of him are said to be light itself, and the children of light. Ye

were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light, Eph. v. 8. And they are therefore said, as the sons of God, to shine as lights, (Phil. ii. 15.) or required to do so; for the words bear either form. This so energetical, efficacious light, is, in the mentioned texts, manifestly intended to connote holiness; as it doth also, Rom. xiii. 12. which the antithesis there shows, works of darkness, and armour of light; and in many other places.

Accordingly the whole, even of practical religion and godliness, is in the Holy Scriptures expressed by the knowledge of God, 2 Chron. xxx. 22. 'Tis signified to be in its own nature sanctifying, and inconsistent with prevailing sin, (1 Cor. xv. 34.) in which they that live are therefore said to be destitute of it, who are also upon the same account said not to have had any sight of God; 3 John, ver. 11. He that sinneth (the word is, ὁ κακοποιῶν, a doer, or worker, of sin) hath not seen God. The light which this vision of God receives, must much more, in the perfected spirits of the just, be supposed so prevalent and victorious, as quite to have chased away and expelled all remainders of this impure darkness. Every such spirit is therefore become as it were an orb of purest, most operative, and lively light, an intellectual and self-actuating sun, full of fervour and motive power, besides mere light. Whereupon whatsoever this light and knowledge discovers it is fit for such a soul to be, it is; and fit for it to do, it can never fail to do it.

Therefore the making of such spirits perfect must be understood, in greatest part, to consist in restoring the order of their faculties towards each other; which was broken by the apostacy to that degree, and they so debilitated and become so languid, so impotent and enfeebled, that neither could the one faculty lead, nor the other follow. Whence light, even about the most practical and the most important matters imaginable, true notions, right sentiments, signified no more to command, to govern, to form and direct the inclinations and motions of the soul; than if, as to all its sentiments about these matters, you did put false instead of true, wrong instead of right, most absurd, most impossible, instead of most congruous, most necessary. Take, for instance, the idea of God, let it be supposed to comprehend (as every one grants it doth, whether he acknowledge his existence or no) all conceivable, all possible excellencies; that it means an infinite, eternal, ever-living, self-subsisting being, most perfectly intelligent, wise, true, holy, righteous, powerful, and blessed, the original of life, being, and blessedness to the creation, according to the several kinds, natures, and capacities of his creatures, the supreme and sovereign Lord of all, to whom it belongs to govern and dispose of what he hath made, of most immense and abounding goodness and benignity, most bountiful to the indigent, compassionate to the miserable, reconcileable to the guilty, propitious to the penitent, most complacentially kind, with highest delight, to the holy and the good, severe only to the obstinately impenitent and implacable, that will by no means or methods be reclaimed.

Take we, again, from hence the measures by which we are to judge what ought to be the dispositions and deportments of his reasonable creatures towards him; that they be entirely composed and made up of love, reverence, humility, dependance, devotedness, subjection, gratitude, and adoration. And suppose we that, in the theory, this be, as it generally is, admitted and acknowledged as the just and most regular consequence of the former. And let us again suppose, that we being made after his image, which in the natural part remains, and is still common to mankind; and as to the moral part, is restored in all that are regenerate and born of God. And that therefore we ought to love universally all mankind, to wish and do well to them, as to ourselves; and no more to injure any man, than we would destroy, pull in pieces, or offer violence to our own life and being. And that we ought, with a more peculiar delectation, to embrace and love all holy and good men, without other distinction, than as any appear more to excel in goodness.

Our light about these things is so clear, they are so little disputable, and so difficult it is to form any argument to the contrary; that few ever set themselves, by any explicit or formed thoughts, to oppose or contend against them. It is not (at least, not generally) so much as attempted to disprove them, or assert contrary principles in opposition to them. Therefore that the dispositions and common practice of men do so little agree with these principles, is not that their notions are herein doubtful, but spiritless; their light is not uncertain, but weak and impotent. And hereupon their knowledge signifies as little to its proper end, as if their apprehensions touching these things were none at all, or quite contrary to what they are.

They as much neglect and slight the blessed God, or decline to be concerned with him, as if they denied all the things of him which his idea contains; or as if they affirmed all the things of him, which it most directly excludes. They shun, they fly from him, as if they thought him the worst of beings, while they acknowledge him the best and most excellent good; disobey, and affront him, as if they thought he had no right to rule them, while they confess him the sovereign Lord of all the world. And steer their course both towards him, and one another, in as direct repugnancy to his rules, as if they thought them all transversed; and that the most opposite system of laws and precepts were given them, by some undoubted authority, to regulate all their practice.

It would amaze a thinking man that all this should be so! that intelligent creatures, that the reasonable, living, immortal spirits of men, should be sunk to so low a pitch of degeneracy and vileness! But much more, that it being so apparently thus, it should be so seldom reflected on! that men are not afraid of themselves! that they appear not as so many frightful monsters, each in their own eyes! That they consider not, What are these faculties for? Why have I such notions of truth in my mind? why have I a will whereby to choose, resolve, act, and be accordingly? What a distorted misshapen creature is this soul of mine; every thing in me running counter to right and fit! Whatever hath thus fatally perverted all their powers, hath stupified them too; so as not only not to find fault, but to applaud and be well pleased with themselves for all this.

But now shall we take our advantage from hence, to conceive and be enamoured of the rectitude, the amiableness of this most excellent state of the perfected spirits of the just! Now doth comely order succeed, instead of the most horrid deformity; distorted limbs are set right, the ligaments and connexion of the disjointed faculties to each other are restored; and whatsoever the enlightened mind suggests as fit and due, presently obtains. No complaint remains of seeing what is better, and doing what is worse; or that when good should be done, evil is present. There is nothing but perfect regularity, harmony, and agreement. All things move smoothly, and with constant equability and decorum. Right dictates of the leading faculty, and ready compliance of such as are to follow, make with them a perpetual, even, and uninterrupted course.

Likeness to God, therefore, in every other just respect, certainly ensues, upon such preceding knowledge of him; for the kind and nature of that knowledge being, as it ought to be, powerful, vigorous, transforming of the whole soul, and the will ductile and compliant; agreeable impressions do most certainly take place. As now, beholding——we are changed, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Much more in that state where the injected divine beams are so strong and vivid, and the receptive disposition so prompt, free, apt, and facile. Therefore to be made like God, is to be made perfect according to the ultimate intendment of these words. The vision, or knowledge of God, in the heavenly state, being never intended for idle, ineffectual speculation; as this perfection is not otherwise to be understood, than with reference to the ends we were made for; that we may be immediately capable of and apt for everlasting adoration, and fruition of the blessed God, in a joint and most full consent and communion with the general assembly, the whole community of all the blessed spirits besides, whose eternal work and delight this will be.

This likeness to God must yet be understood with exception to the divine peculiarities, as hath been elsewhere shown (whither we now refer only to save the labour of

transcribing.) In respect of which peculiarities, also, there must be, on our part, a correspondency, *i. e.* a likeness with allowance for necessary disagreement; as between a seal and the impression, where what is convex in the one, is hollow in the other, and yet otherwise like, *i. e.* correspondent to each other too. So the case is between the blessed God's all-sufficient fulness, and our receptive emptiness; between his supremacy, and our subjection. In respect to other things, common to him and us, with the rest of those happy spirits that inhabit the regions of light and bliss, spirituality itself, life and vigour, knowledge, wisdom, holiness, love, serenity, benignity, mercy, peace, and joy, there is a nearer resemblance; these things passing under the same name with him, and with us, but with the infinite inequality still of God and creature.

Now let us here give ourselves leave to pause awhile, and contemplate those innumerable multitudes of pure and happy creatures, perfected, or ever perfect spirits, that inhabit and replenish those ample spacious regions above, the vast, (and to us, or to any thought of ours,) immense, and endless tracts of light and glory. Consider them every one composed and made up of lively light, and love, as we are told God is light, 1 John i. 5. and God is love, *ch.* iv. *v.* 16. Consider them all as most intelligent and knowing creatures, even of the most profound and hidden mysteries, that here were wont to perplex and puzzle the most inquisitive mind; ignorant of nothing, or apt to comprehend any thing, needful and pleasant to be known, or lawful to be inquired into; curious to know nothing useless, or unlawful; most perfectly wise creatures, prudent sages, endowed with a self-governing wisdom, so as easily, without a vexatious solicitude and anxiety, but with a noble freedom, to order and command all their thoughts, appetitions, actions, and deportments towards God, themselves, and one another, so as never to be guilty of mistake or error, in any motion of mind or will; never to omit any thing in its season, or do any thing out of season. Consider them whether in solemn assembly, (which may be stated and perpetual, by successively appointed numbers for ought we know,) or diverting and retiring, or faring to and fro, as inclination, with allowance, or command, may direct. Yet all every where full of God, continually receiving the vital, satisfying, glorious communications of the every-where present, self-manifesting Deity; all full of reverence and most dutiful love to the eternal Father of spirits, his eternal Son and Spirit; all formed into perpetual, lowliest, and most grateful adoration, with highest delight and pleasure; all apprehensive of their depending state, and that they owe their all to that fulness which filleth all in all. Every one in his own eyes a self-nothing, having no separate divided interest, sentiment, will, or inclination. Every one continually self-consistent, agreeing with himself, ever free of all self-displeasure, never finding any cause, or shadow of a cause, for any angry self-reflection upon any undue thought or wish in that their present, perfect state; though not unmindful what they were, or might have been, and ascribing their present state and stability to the grace of God, and dedicating their all to the praise and glory of that most free and unaccountable grace; all well assured, and unsuspiciously conscious, with unexpressible satisfaction, of their acceptance with God, and placing with the fullest sense and relish their very life in his favour. All full of the most complacential benignity towards one another, counting each one's felicity his own, and every one's enjoyments being accordingly multiplied so many thousand-fold, as he apprehends every one as perfectly pleased and happy as himself.

Let but any one recount these things with himself, as he easily may, with far greater enlargement of thoughts, many more such things as these; and he needs not be at a loss for a notion of this perfect state of the spirits of the just. And for further confirmation, as well as for a somewhat more distinct and explicit conception hereof, let it be moreover considered, What was the undertaking and design of our Redeemer, to whom the next words direct our eye: And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, &c. He was to be the restorer of these once lost, apostate spirits, and besides reconciling them to God by his blood, that speaks better things than that of Abel, was to impart his own Spirit to them; and by the tenor of that new testament, or covenant, whereof he was Mediator, was not only to procure that their sins and iniquities should be remembered no more; but that the divine laws should be put in their minds, and written in their hearts, *ch.* viii. 10, 12. They are therefore, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, to be made perfect, (*ch.* xiii. 20, 21.) in every good work to do his will, having all that wrought in them which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Christ Jesus. Now when shall he be said to have accomplished his design? Not till every one be presented perfect (Col. i. 28.) and faultless, in the presence of the Divine glory, Jude 24. Do but consider what was a design worthy of so great an undertaker, the Son of God; and of his being engaged so deeply, of his being so earnestly intent upon it, as to become first a man, then a sacrifice, to effect it.

Consider his death, and resurrection, wherein he will have all that belong to him to have a *consortium*, a participation with him, and conformity to him; as is largely discoursed, Phil. iii. and hence we are to make our estimate what is the mark and prize of the high calling of God in Christ, *v.* 12, 14. This can be no other than final consummate Christianity, the Christian's high calling in *termino*; and which they that are inchoatively perfect or sincere, must be so minded, as to design it for themselves, *v.* 15. Therefore let me but tell any man, so that he can understand me, what true Christianity now is, and he can tell me what heaven is. Let me tell him what it is to be a sincere Christian, in this present state; and he can tell me what it is to be perfect, in the heavenly state. The writing God's law in the heart truly, and perfectly, goes far towards both.

The two great commandments impressed, that are both fulfilled in love, are of vast compass to this purpose, and with the certain *connexa*, comprehend all: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, &c. And——thy neighbour as thyself, &c. What a heaven upon earth would these two create, reduced to practice! and when the impression is perfect, what needs there more? But God knows, men too commonly measure their heaven by their Christianity, on the wrong hand; a Christianity, and a heaven, both external and foreign to them. God deliver me from this so palpable and destructive a delusion of a Christianity, and a heaven, foreign to my soul! A religion and a felicity that touch not our minds, that never impress our inner man; what can we be the better for them? What to be imposed upon by so absurd a misconceit, and so repugnant to Scripture? which so expressly tells us, that glory, we are finally to expect, is a glory whereby we are to be glorified, made glorious, and to be revealed in us, and wherein we are to partake with Christ, Rom. viii. 17, 18. Or did the Son of God put on man, and suffer so deeply for us, with a design upon us less than this? But now my work is done (nor do my limits allow me to enlarge) in reference to the

II. Head of discourse proposed: In what sense sincere Christians may be said to be already come to the spirits of the just made perfect. Enough may be collected from what hath been said. 'Tis to be understood,

1. In a relative sense, they are come, they already belong, to that general assembly, that church which the myriads of angels, and the perfected spirits of the just, are of. A local coming none can pretend in this case to dream of, they are said to be come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Such were truly said to be come into the constitution of the Roman polity, that were *civitate donati*, admitted freemen, though they lived a thousand miles off.

2. In a real sense, by a gradual but true participation of the *primordia*, *the first* and most constituent principles, and perfections of the heavenly state.

And now, if that were the thing designed, there is a most adequate ground-work laid for a true and the most ample encomium of that rare person, our never too deeply lamented, nor too highly renowned queen, whose funerals drew my thoughts to this theme. View the perfections of the spirits of the just, as they were growing, and more eminently grown, towards their highest pitch; and here is our ground. Do not wonder it is laid as high as heaven, for thence they begin, as well as end there. By

most benign influences from thence, though the plant was set on earth, they had an early bud, in concealment; but we have seen them blossom in open view, still aspiring thitherward, as there they are fully blown. Her otherwise royal parentage, was thus incomparably more royal. The lustre of her excellent virtues had all the advantage which they could have by dwelling well; as the endowments (what they were) of a great prince heretofore, were noted to have had the contrary disadvantage. It was common sense, not the poet's authority, that could make the apprehension take place, That virtue is more grateful, exerted from a comely body. So illustrious an instance would give more countenance, than the most argumentative philosophy, to the opinion, that souls have a great, subordinate agency in forming their own mansions; which the more one apprehends, the less credulous he would be of their original equality. It must be a very peculiar genius, that could stamp so inimitable and undeceiving signatures, as appears in her majesty's most graceful countenance, in her comely mien and looks, and all her deportments. Whosoever should behold the fabric she inhabited, made up of pulchritude and state, must conclude some very lovely and venerable inhabitant dwelt there. But nearer approaches discovered such excellencies of the indwelling mind, that quickness of apprehension, that clearness and strength of reason, that solidity of judgment, that complectionate goodness, the ἐφέσεις which that noble philosopher speaks of, as the seed-plot of virtues; that must soon beget, not conviction only, but admiration.

Such were the bounties of nature in the forming a rare and excellent person, but how munificent were the largesses of grace! That reverence of the Divine Majesty that appeared in her whole course, a life transacted under the government of religion; her constant care to avoid what she thought sinful, and readiness to do what she judged might be serviceable to the interest of God; her detestation of the profligate wickedness, that she knew to be dishonourable and offensive to him, and of all the principles that any way tended thereto. Her continued conversation with God, in the constant practice of religious duties, and in all the exercises of godliness that belonged to her (most beloved and frequented) closet, the family, or more solemn assembly; her most composed seriousness in attendance upon the worship of God, in the way which she chose (and which that she chose no one could think strange) the natural and most unaffected appearance hereof, the remotest from ostentation, but which could not quite be hid, nor ought, when in religious assemblies we are to testify we all worship the same God, and that all our applications, and addresses, have one centre above, and are all to be directed to one and the same glorious object (unless one would have the religion of the church be allowed the retiredness of a closet, or reduce joint social worship, wherein all are, some way or other, to express their unanimity and consent, unto that which is merely solitary and single.) Her assiduity in her religious course, the seasons, order, and constancy whereof seemed to be governed by the ordinances of Heaven, that ascertain the succession of day and night; so that what was said so long ago of that famed person's justice (and which equally may of hers) might have a noble application to her religion, That one might as soon divert the course of the sun, as turn her from her daily course in religious duties: this argued a steady principle, and of the highest excellency, that of divine love. Any other would have its more frequent qualms and inequalities. The remark was wise and weighty, concerning the insincere man, Job xxvii. 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God? That course is never like to be even, uniform, and continued, that springs not from love; or is not sweetened by delight and pleasure. All these are to us great indications of a copious communication of divine grace, and that she received not the grace of God in vain. I cannot here omit her reverential regard for the Lord's day, which at the Hague I had a very particular occasion to take notice of. On a Saturday, a vessel (the pacquet-boat) was stranded not far from thence, which lying very near the shore, I viewed, (happening to be thereabouts at that time,) till the last passengers were brought (as all were) safe off. Multitudes went to see it, and her highness being informed of it, said she was willing to see it too, but thought she should not, for it was then too late for that evening, and she reckoned by Monday it would be shivered to pieces; (though it remaining entire till then, she was pleased to view it that day;) but she resolved, she added, she would not give so ill an example, as to go see it on the Lord's day.

Next to her exemplary piety towards God, shone with a second lustre her most amiable benignity towards men; and peculiarly towards them whom she judged pious, of whatsoever persuasion, in respect of the circumstances of religion. She opened not her mouth but with wisdom, and in her tongue was the law of kindness. She hath divers times expressed her acceptance, value, and desire of their prayers, whom she knew in some modes of worship to differ from her; as one that well understood, that the kingdom of God stands not in lesser things, but in righteousness, peace, &c. and that they who in these things serve Christ, are acceptable to God, and are to be approved of men. She was not inaccessible to such of her subjects, whose dissentient judgments, in some such things, put them into lower circumstances. Great she was in all valuable excellencies, nor greater in any, than in her most condescending goodness. Her singular humility adorned all the rest. Speaking once of a good thing, which she intended, she added, But of myself I can do nothing; and somewhat being by one (of two more only) then present interposed, she answered: she hoped God would help her. She is, as the text speaks, gone to mount Sion, in the highest sense of that phrase. And to sum up all, he that will read the character, Psal. xv. and xxiv. of an inhabitant of that holy hill, will there read her true and most just character. Wherein I cannot omit to take notice, how sacred she reckoned her word. I know with whom she hath sometimes conferred, whether having given a promise of such a seeming import, she could consistently therewith do so or so; saying, that whatever prejudice it were to her, she would never depart from her word.

These rich endowments every way accomplished her for all the duties that belonged to her, whether in her Christian, conjugal, or political capacity. Which if we consider together, the world cannot give an instance, for many bypast ages, of so much lost out of it, in one person. When did Christianity lose so conspicuous an ornament? a king so delectable and helpful a consort? a kingdom so venerable and beloved a sovereign? For our king how are we concerned to pray, Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions! And we are to hope he hath some such sincere purposes, and vows deeply infixed in his heart, as those subjoined in that Psalm cxxxii. which will engage the Divine presence with him, by which, neither shall his pressures be intolerable, nor his difficulties insuperable; but his bow shall abide in strength, and the arm of his hands be made strong, by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, Gen. xlix. But England, England! how deplorable is thy case! In what agonies should every concerned heart be for thee, O England! In the latter days (and God grant they be not too late) thou mayst consider, that after many former, defeated methods, thou hadst a prince (yea, princes) studiously intent upon making thee a reformed, happy people. Is there now no cause to fear, lest it be determined; Let him that is filthy, be filthy still; and him that is unjust, be unjust still.——

Few can be ignorant of the endeavours of our most gracious queen, to that purpose. And I am persuaded nothing did more recommend our deceased, excellent archbishop to her Majesty, than that she knew his heart to be as hers, in that design, *viz.* of a general reformation of manners, that must have concerned all parties; and without which, (leading and preparing us thereto,) union, and the cessation of parties, was little to have been hoped for. And so far as I could understand, the attempt of it was as little intended; being otherwise not likely to meet with either a blessing from God, or any sufficient disposition to it with men. Great dispositions must, with much gratitude to God, be acknowledged in those who hold that supreme, and this subordinate station. But such a work is not likely to succeed, till (by whatsoever mean) minds be brought to that temper, that it will even do itself. And that two such persons should be removed out of them, within not much more than a month's time, is an awful

umbrage to us of a divine determination, that less gentle methods are fitter for us. And God's holy will be done!

It is now obvious to any considering person, that many very useful reflections might be made upon the text and the occasion together. I shall shut up this present discourse with these that follow.

1. It ought to be most remote from us to confine, in our narrow thoughts, sincere religion and godliness to a party, distinguished by little things and most extra-essential thereto. Take we that great apostle's document, I perceive God is no respecter of persons; and what he said of nations, may not we as aptly say that of all such parties? They that fear God, and work righteousness, are accepted of him, Acts x.

Let us once learn to reckon substantial godliness a greater thing, than the using or not using this or that ceremony. And account that faith, mercy, judgment, and the love of God, are not to be past over for as little things, as the tithing of mint, annise, and cummin. I believe there are few in the world, if they cast their eyes about them, but might truly say (what I thank God, I have often thought) that all of our parties that hold the substantials of religion, I have know some of far greater value than myself. Let the being a good Christian, signify more with us than to belong to a so——or so——shaped, or ——figured church.

A noted writer,[1] among the ancients, brings in one, saying, by way of exprobration to Christians, There is Socrates, the prince of wisdom, if any among you be so great, let them imitate him, if they can. What persuasion among us can produce a greater example, than we have been now considering; or more worthy the imitation even of private Christians?

2. The spirits of the just on earth are in a great propinquity and have a near alliance to heaven. They are not there to have the first foundations laid of their blessed state, but are only to be made perfect. They have in them here the first principles, the elements of their final blessedness; heaven in little, as the acorn contains the tree, or the embryo the man.

3. The just in this world are of the church in heaven. They are come to the general assembly, the church of the first-born, &c. All sincere Christians, whether in heaven or earth, (as hath been noted,) make but one family, Eph. iii. 15. Good God! can our little differences, here, set us at greater distance than heaven and earth! The observation is worth considering of that wise and noble person;[k] "It will be found a matter of great moment and use, to define what, and of what latitude, those points are, which discorporate men from the body of the church——And if any think this hath been done, now long ago, let them seriously consider with what sincerity and moderation the same hath been performed," &c. And if it had not been done with due sincerity, and moderation in his days, it is much to be doubted whether it have since. In the mean time it is to be considered, that what differenceth any thing, constitutes it; and if a church (of whatsoever denomination) be constituted in its superstructure (though its foundation be good) of hay, and stubble, of things that can belong to no church, as a church, it must some time or other suffer loss: and though the builders be saved, it must be by a more penetrative, than an imagined, purgatory-fire.

4. Angels must have kind propensions towards men, especially good men, in this world, knowing these are of the same society and church with them; though the Divine wisdom hath not judged it suitable to our present state of probation, there should be an open and common intercourse between them and us. 'Tis however a great incongruity we should have strange, uncouth, shy, frightful, or unfrequent thoughts of them in the mean time.

[1] Min. Fel.

5. When we find any excellent persons, in our world, attain far and high towards the perfection of the heavenly state; it ought to be a great encouragement to us, and is an obligation to aspire to some light pitch. We see it is not an impossible, or an impracticable thing; and should disdain to crawl now as worms, when we are to soar as angels.

6. We ought hereupon to acknowledge and adore the munificence and power of Divine grace, that it should design the making of such objects as we, fit to be associated with such an assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect; and will not fail to effect it, if we comply with the apt methods appointed for that blessed purpose.

7. When such ascend, and are taken up from us, that God had eminently prepared for translation, we should take great care lest we unduly regret it. That we do not envy heaven its own, to which they are more akin than to our earth; and which had a greater right in them, than we could pretend.

8. We should look upon funeral solemnities for such, with more prospect than retrospect, and consider them as directing our eye less downward to our own forsaken world, than upwards to the celestial regions and inhabitants. To such, to die is to be born; they die only out of our mean world, and are born into a most glorious one. Their funerals should be celebrations of their ascent, and an exulting joy should therefore, in that case, not be quite banished from funeral sorrows, but be allowed to mingle therewith, as sunbeams glittering in a cloud. When the greatest person was leaving this world, that ever lived in it, he says, If you loved me, you would rejoice that I say, I go to the Father. We should bear our part in the joys of heaven, upon this occasion, if we relate to it. And when we are told, there is joy there, among the angels of God, for the conversion of such, who are thereby but prepared to come to their assembly; we may conclude there is much more for their glorification, when they are fully come, and joined to it. Funeral solemnities are very dull melancholy shows, without such references forwards, and upwards. With how different a temper of mind would two persons have been the spectators of Jacob's funeral, the one of whom should have looked no further than the Canaanites or Egyptians did, who would only say, Some great person is dead; but the other, by divine illumination, is enabled to apprehend, This dust here mingles with the earth of this land, to presignify this people, of whom he was the head, must possess it. Yea, moreover, here the great God will fix his residence and throne; upon such a mount shall be the palace of the supreme King. Here, after great mutations and revolutions, and great destructions both of the Egyptians and Canaanites, shall this people have a long succession of princes and rulers that shall be of themselves. And all this but as representing a King and kingdom that shall rule, and spread over all the earth, and reach up at length into heaven. Canaan shall be a holy land. Unto Sion's King shall tributary princes bring their gifts, out of Egypt, and Ethiopia stretch out her hands; and all nations serve him. His empire shall confine with the universe, and all power be given him both in heaven and earth. With what a large and raised mind would such a one have beheld this funeral! What better Canaan, than we now behold, we shall have in this world, God knows! And we should be the less solicitous to know intermediate things, when we are so fully ascertained of the glorious end of all things. And let us reflect upon the solemn pomp of that late mournful assembly, that lamented our queen's departure out of our world, comparing it with the transcended magnificence of that triumph assembly, into which she is received above.

[k] Lord Viscount Verul. Adv. of Learn. lib. 2.

THE GOOD MAN'S DESIRE

OF BEING ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND PRESENT WITH THE LORD:

A FUNERAL SERMON,

ON THE DEATH OF

MRS. MARGARET BAXTER.

TO THE VERY REVEREND MR. RICHARD BAXTER.

SIR,

WHEN you assigned unto me that part, not of forming a memorial for your excellent deceased consort, (which is reserved to the fittest hand,) but of instructing the people upon the occasion of her decease; this text of Scripture occurring also to my thoughts, (which I reckoned might sufficiently agree with the design you generally recommended to me, though I am sensible how little the prosecution did so,) it put me upon considering with how great disadvantage we set ourselves, at any time, to reason against bodily inclination; the great antagonist we have to contend against, in all our ministerial labours! An attempt which, if a higher power set not in with us, looks like the opposing of our faint breath to the steady course of a mighty river!

I have often thought of Cicero's wonder, "That since we consist of a mind, and a body, the skill of curing and preserving the body is so admired, as to have been thought a divine invention; that which refers to the mind is neither so desired, before it be found out, nor so cultivated afterwards, nor is approved and acceptable to so many: yea is even to the most, suspected, and hateful!"

Even the tyrant Phalaris tells one, in an epistle, (though by way of menace,) that whereas a good physician may cure a distempered body, death is the only physician for a distempered mind. It works not indeed a universal cure. But of such on whom it may, how few are there that count not the remedy worse than the disease! Yet how many thousands are there, that for greater hoped bodily advantages, afterwards, endure much more pain and trouble than there is in dying!

We are a mysterious sort of creatures! Yet I acknowledge the wisdom of God is great and admirable, in planting in our natures so strong a love of this bodily life, without which the best would be more impatient of living on earth, so long as God thinks it requisite they should; and to the worst, death would not be a sufficiently formidable punishment; and consequently human laws and justice would be, in great part, eluded.

And the same Divine wisdom is not less admirable, in providing there should so generally be so much of mutual love, as doth obtain among near friends and relatives; for thereby their cohabitation and mutual offices towards each other are made more pleasant and easy; which is a great compensation for the concomitant evil, that by the same love their parting with one another cannot but be rendered grievous.

But for you, who live so much upon the borders, and in the pleasant view of the other state: the one separation is, I doubt not, much easier to your sense, and the other to your fore-thoughts, than they are with the most. A perfect indifferency towards this present bodily state and life, is, in mine eyes, a most covetable thing, and my daily aim; wherein I entreat your prayers may assist.

Your most respectful, though most unworthy
fellow-servant, and expectant in the work
and hope of the Gospel,

J. H.

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2 CORINTHIANS V. 8.

WE ARE CONFIDENT, I SAY, AND WILLING RATHER TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

THE solemn face of this assembly seems to tell me, that you already know the present, special occasion of it; and that I scarce need to tell any of you, that our worthy, honoured friend, Mrs. Baxter, is dead. You have ('tis like most of you) often met her in this place, when her pleased looks were wont to show what delight she took to have many share in those great advantages, wherein she had a more peculiar interest; you are now to meet her here no more, but are met yourselves to lament together, that our world hath lost so desirable an inhabitant; and to learn (as I hope you design) what so instructive an occasion shall (of itself, or as it may be improved) serve to teach us.

It doth of itself most obviously teach the common document, that we, who are of the same make and mould, must all die too. And our own prudence should hereupon advance one step further, and apprehend it a most covetable thing, that the temper of our minds might comply with this unalterable state of our case; and that we be in a disposition, since we must die, to die willingly, and with our own consent. Nothing can be more irrational, or un-

happy, than to be engaged in a continual quarrel with necessity, which will prevail, and be too hard for us at last. No course is so wise in itself, or good for us, as to be reconciled to what we cannot avoid; to bear a facile yielding mind towards a determination, which admits of no repeal.

And the subject, now to be insisted on, may help us to improve the sad occasion to this very important purpose; and show us that dying, which cannot be willed for itself, may be joined with somewhat else which may, and ought to be so; and in that conjunction become the object of a rational and most complacential willingness. A subject recommended to me (though not the special text) by one, than whom I know no man that was better able to make a fit choice; as (in the present case) none could have that right to choose. I cannot stay to discuss and open the most fruitful, pleasant series of discourse, in the foregoing verses, though there will be occasion to reflect somewhat upon it by and by; but, in the text, the apostle asserts two things concerning the temper of his spirit, in reference to death: His confidence, and complacency, θαρροῦμεν, καὶ εὐδοκοῦμεν.

First, His confidence, or his courage and fortitude, "We are confident, I say." He had said it before, ver. 6. We are always confident; and assigned the cause, Knowing that while we are present in the body we are absent from the Lord. And declared the kind of that knowledge, (*viz.* which he had of that presence of the Lord, whereof he was deprived, by being present in the body,) that is, that it was the knowledge of faith, not of sight, ver. 7. Now here he adds, We are confident, I say. It notes a deliberate courage, and the fixedness of it; that it was not a sudden fit, a passion soon over. He had said above, θαρροῦντες πάντοτε, We are confident at all times; it was his habitual temper. And here the ingemination signifies increase, as if he had said, We grow more and more bold, and adventurous, while we consider the state of our case, and what we suffer by our presence in the body. Sense of injury or damage heightens, and adds an edge unto true valour. We would venture upon a thousand deaths, if the matter were left entirely to our own option, rather than be thus withheld any longer from the presence of our blessed Lord; a thing whereof nothing but duty to him could make us patient. We are not destitute of the fortitude to enable us even to rush upon death, without more ado, if he did say the word; but as yet he bids us stay, and his supreme and holy will must in all things determine ours. Therefore 'tis immediately subjoined, in the midst of this high transport, ver. 9. Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we might be accepted of him, or well-pleasing to him (εὐάρεστοι αὐτῷ εἶναι.) We less mind the pleasing ourselves, than him. We are indifferent to life or death, being in the body, or out of it, in comparison of that; his pleasure is more to us than either. Here the highest fortitude yields and submits itself, otherwise, and for his own part, and as to what concerned his own inclination singly, and in the divided sense, the apostle to his confidence doth,

Secondly, Add complacency. We are better pleased (εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον.) This is a distinct thing, (a valiant man will venture upon wounds and death, but is not pleased with them,) but in reference to so excellent an object, and occasion, they must mingle, and the latter runs into the former. We are willing rather (as we read it) to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. The word which we read willing, signifies to approve or like well, not a merely judicious, but complacential approbation; the word, whence comes the εὐδοκία often ascribed to God in Scripture, which signifies the high satisfaction he takes in all his purposes and determinations. The εὐδοκία θελήματος, Ephes. i. 5. is certainly no tautology, but speaks how perfectly and pleasingly he agrees, and (as it were) consents with himself, in all that ever he had resolved on. This rather, says the apostle, is our εὐδοκία, the thing that would please us best, and wherein we should most highly satisfy ourselves. It would not be the matter of our submission only, or whereto we could yield, when we cannot help it; but of our highest joy and pleasure. According as we find it was with the Psalmist, (Psalm xvi.) in the same case, (which though it had a further meaning in reference to Christ, had a true meaning as to himself also,) Therefore my heart is glad, my glory rejoices, my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in *sheol*, the state of the dead, nor suffer thine Holy One to see corruption, but wilt show me the path of life; and no matter though it lie through the dark shady vale, it leads however into that blessed presence of thine (the same with that in the text) where is fulness of joy; and unto that right-hand (that high and honourable station) where are pleasures for evermore. Both these, the apostle's courage and fortitude, and his complacency or well-pleasedness, have express reference to the state of death, or of being absent from the body. The one respects it as a formidable (but superable) evil, the other as a desirable and most delectable good. But both have reference to it in its concomitancy, or tendency, *viz.* as absence from the body should be accompanied (or be immediately followed) with being present with the Lord. The sense therefore of the whole verse may be fitly expressed thus:—That it is the genuine temper of holy souls, not only to venture with confidence upon the state of absence, or separation from the body; but to choose it with great complacency and gladness, that they may be present with the Lord.

Body, we are not here to understand so generally, as if he affected, or counted upon a perpetual final state of separation from any body at all. No, the temper of his spirit had nothing in it so undutiful, or unnatural; no such reluctation, or disposition to contend against the common lot of man, the law of human nature, and the comely order which the Author of our beings, and of all nature, hath settled in the universe; that whereas one sort of creatures, that have life, should be wholly confined to terrestrial bodies; another, quite exempt from them; ours should be a middle nature, between the angelical and the brutal. So as we should, with the former, partake of intellectual, immortal spirit; and a mortal body made up and organized of earthly materials, with the latter: which yet we might also depose, and reassume, changed and refined from terrene dross. The apostle's temper hath in it nothing of rebellion, or regret against this most apt and congruous order and constitution; he had no impatient proud resentment of that gradual debasement and inferiority that, in this respect, we are made a little lower than the angels. When Porphyry tells us, in the life of Plotinus, that he blushed as often as he thought of his being a body, it was agreeable enough to his notion of the pre-existence of the soul; *i. e.* if it were true, that the original state of human spirits was the same with that of angels, (which this is no fit season to dispute against,) and that by their own fault, some way or other, they lapsed and slid down into grosser matter, and were caught into vital union with it, there was just cause of shame indeed. Apuleius's transformation (which many of you know what it means) if it had been real, was not more ignominious.

But it appears the apostle affected not a state, wherein he should be simply naked, or unclothed of any body at all; for he longs to be clothed upon with his heavenly house, ver. 2. And whereas he tells us, ver. 4. that which he groaned for, was not to be unclothed, but clothed upon; that being unclothed, doth not mean the act, but the state, *i. e.* that he did not covet or aspire to a perpetual final state of being naked, or without any body at all. For so he speaks, ver. 3. If so be (as we read) that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. The particle εἴγε admits to be read, since that, inasmuch as, for truly; and so the 2d and 3d verses will be connected thus; In this, (ver. 2.) *i. e.* for this, *viz.* for this cause, as ἐν often signifies casualty (not in this house, for τούτῳ and οἰκίᾳ will not agree,) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, *i. e.* of heaven, or suitable to heaven (ἐξ denotes here, as often, the matter whereof a thing is formed and made,) a body made up of a heavenly material; or (which is all one) an earthly body refined, and transformed into such an one. And then he subjoins the reason why his desire is so conditioned, and limited, or runs only in this particular current, to have not no body at all, but only not such a body. He wishes to have a body made more habile, and commodious, and fitter for the uses of a glorified soul; (which hath its own more inward clothing peculiar to itself, in respect whereof that of such a body would be an additional one, a superinvestiture;

as the word ἐπενδύσασθαι imports;) his desire is thus limited and modified for this reason. Inasmuch as, being thus clothed, we shall not be found naked, ver. 3. or without any body at all; which the law of our creation admits us not to effect, or aspire unto. And therefore in qualifying our desire thus, we shall contain ourselves within our own bounds, and not offer any thing whereof humanity is, by the Creator's pleasure and constitution, incapable. Therefore he inculcates the same thing over again. We groan not to be unclothed, but only to be clothed upon; ver. 4. where that unclothed (the thing he desired not) must signify the state and not the act only, is evident; in that being clothed (the thing which he did desire) must plainly be so understood. For was it only an entrance into glory he desired, and not continuance in a glorified state? Nor can this being unclothed much less refer as an act to the present clothing of this earthly body, as if it were our being divested of that which he intended in this 4th verse, as the thing he desired not, for then the 4th verse would contradict this 8th, where he tells us he did desire it. The meaning then is, that he did not desire to be exempted from wearing a body, or to be without any at all; he did only covet to be absent from this body (gross and terrene as now it was) that he might be present with the Lord; with which he found being in such a body, and in the several accompanying circumstances of this bodily state, to be inconsistent. Wherefore it was a terrestrial body (the earthly house of this tabernacle, as 'tis ver. 1.) which he was now better pleased to quit upon this account.

And I say it is the genuine temper of a holy soul to be like-minded, not their constant, explicit, discernible sense. We must allow for accidents, (as we shall note afterwards,) but when they are themselves and in their right mind, and so far as the holy divine life doth prevail in them, this is their temper.

And now, that I may more fully open this matter to you, I shall,

I. Endeavour to unfold, somewhat more distinctly, the state of the case, in reference whereto good and holy souls are thus affected.

II. Shall show you what is their true and genuine temper, or how it is that they stand affected, in reference to that case.

III. Shall discover how agreeable this temper is to the general frame and complexion of a holy soul.

And then make such reflections upon the whole, as may be more especially useful to ourselves.

I. We are to take, as much as we can, a distinct view and state of the case. We see the apostle speaks by way of comparison, εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον, we are willing rather. We are therefore to consider (that we may comprehend clearly the true state of this case) what the things are which he compares; and between which his mind might be supposed, as it were, to have been before (at least in order of nature before) in some suspense, till at last it come so complacentially to incline, and be determined this one way. Take the account of the whole case in these particulars.

1. There are here two principal terms, between which the motion and inclination of such a mind lies, from the one to the other. The Lord, and the body. Both do as it were attract and draw (or are apt to do) two several ways. The Lord strongly draws on the one hand, and the body hangs on, and holds, and draws in as strongly to itself as it can, on the other. The body as having us present in it. And how? not locally only, but in the way of vital union and communion with it. And that shows how we are to understand being present with the Lord too, not by a mere local presence, but of a more intimate vital union and commerce. Where, as in the union between the soul and body, the more excellent communicates life, the other receives it; so it must be here. Though now the Lord is present thus, in some measure, (which this attraction supposes,) yet speaking comparatively, that presence is absence, in respect to what we are to look for hereafter. Both these unions are very mysterious, and both infer very strong and powerful drawing, or holding together of the things so united.

There is no greater mystery in nature, than the union between the soul and the body. That a mind and spirit should be so tied and linked with a clod of clay, that, while that remains in a due temper, it cannot by any art or power free itself! It can by any act of the will move a hand, or foot, or the whole body; but cannot move from it one inch. If it move hither and thither, or by a leap upward to ascend a little, the body still follows; it cannot shake or throw it off. We cannot take ourselves out; by any allowable means we cannot, nor by any at all (that are at least within mere human power) as long as the temperament lasts. While that remains, we cannot go; if that fail, we cannot stay; though there be so many open avenues, (could we suppose any material bounds to hem in, or exclude a spirit,) we cannot go out or in at pleasure. A wonderful thing! and I wonder we no more wonder at our own make and frame in this respect, that we do not, with reverent submissive adoration, discern and confess how far we are outwitted and overpowered by our wise and great Creator; that we not only cannot undo his work upon us in this respect, but that we cannot so much as understand it. What so much akin are a mind and a piece of earth, a clod and a thought, that they should be thus affixed to one another; or that there should be such a thing in nature as thinking clay! But hereupon, what advantage hath this body upon the soul and spirit! In the natural union is grounded a moral one, of love and affection; which (on the soul's part) draws and binds it down with mighty efficacy.

Again, how mysterious and ineffable is the union of the Lord and the soul; and how more highly venerable, as this is a sacred mystery! And who would not admire at their proud disdainful folly, that while they cannot explain the union between the soul and body, are ready to jeer at their just, humble, and modest ignorance, that call this other a mystical union? or, because they know not what to make of it, would make nothing, and will not allow there should be any such thing, or would have it be next to nothing. Have those words no sense belonging to them, or not a great sense, (1 Cor. vi. 17.) But he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit? And, upon this supernatural union also (be it what it will) methinks the binding and drawing power of love should not be less!

2. We must conceive in our minds as distinctly as we can, the peculiar adjuncts of each of these more principal terms; *i. e.* on the part of the body first, we are to consider a sensible, a grossly corporeal world, to which this body doth connaturalize us, and whereto we are attempered by our being in the body, and living this bodily life. This body, while we live in it, is the *terminus uniens*, the medium, the unitive bond between us and it. In this world we find ourselves encompassed with objects that are suitable, grateful, and entertaining to our bodily senses, and the several principles, perceptions, and appetites that belong to the bodily life: and these things familiarize and habituate us to this world, and make us, as it were, one with it. There is, particularly, a bodily people, as is intimated in the text, that we are associated with by our being in the body. The words ἐνδημῆσαι and ἐκδημῆσαι, in this verse, (and the same are used verse the 6th and 9th,) signify there is such a people of which we are, and from which we would be dissociated; ἔνδημος is *civis*, *incola*, or *indigena*, an inhabitant, or native, among this or that people; as ἔκδημος is *peregrinus*, one that lives abroad and is severed from the people he belonged unto. The apostle considers himself, while in the body, as living among such a sort of people as dwell in bodies, a like sort of people to himself; and would be no longer a home-dweller with these, but travel away from them, to join and be a dweller with another people.

For also, on the other hand, he considers, with the Lord, an invisible world, where he resides; and an incorporeal people, he presides over. So that the case here is, are we willing to be dispeopled from this bodily sort of people, and peopled with that incorporeal sort, the world, and community of spirits?

3. It is further to be considered in this case, that we are related both ways, related to the body, and related to the Lord; to the one people, and the other, the one claims an interest in us, and so doth the other. We have many earthly alliances, 'tis true, and we have many heavenly; we are related to both worlds, and have affairs lying in both. And now what mighty pleadings might the case admit, on the

one hand, and the other? Were the body, apart, capable of pleading for itself, to this effect it must bespeak the soul: "I am thy body, I was made and formed for thee, and, someway, by thee. Thou hast so long inhabited and dwelt with me, and in me. Thou art my soul, my life, my strength; if thou be absent, I am a carcase and fall to dirt; and thou wilt be a maimed thing, and scarce thy whole self." But though it cannot dictate, and do not utter such words, nature doth itself plead more strongly than words can.

And again, how much more potently, might the Lord plead for his having the soul more closely united and intimately conversant with himself! "Thou art one of the souls I have loved and chosen, which were given to me, and for which I offered up my own soul. I have visited thee in thy low and abject state; said to thee in thy blood, Live; have inspired thee with a heavenly, sacred, divine life, the root and seminal principle of a perfect, glorious, eternal life. Let this body drop, which hath been long thy burden! let it fall and die, it matters not! Yet since thou lovest it, I will restore it thee again, pure and glorious, like mine own. I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, John xi. 25. Never fear to venture thyself with me, nor to commit thy body to my after-care."

And now all the question will be, Which alleges the more considerable things? and the matter will be estimated, as the temper of the soul is. An earthly, sordid soul, when the overture is made to it of such a translation, will be ready to say, as the Shunamite (2 Kings iv.) did to the prophet, when he offered to speak for her to the king, (perhaps that her husband might be called to court, and made a great man,) I dwell among my own people, (an answer that in her case well expressed the true greatness of a contented mind, but in this case nothing more mean,) I am well where I am, and dwell among a people like myself. So saith the degenerate abject soul, sunk into a deep oblivion of its own country; Here I dwell a fixed inhabitant of this world, among a corporeal people, where I make one. And we find how it is with this sort of people, each one charms another, and they grow familiar, have mutual ties one upon another, and there is a loathsomeness to part. Especially as here, in this lower world, we are variously disposed, and cast into several mutual relations to one another; husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, all dwelling in bodies alike, cohabiting, eating and drinking daily, and conversing together. These are great and sensible endearments, by which the minds of men become as it were knit, and united to one another. How are men's spirits fixed to their own countries! *Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine*——'tis by an inexpressible pleasure and sweetness, that the people of one country are as it were linked and held together.

But would not a heavenly, new-born soul say, No, this is none of my country, I seek a better, and am here but a pilgrim and stranger; this is none of my people? So it was with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that conversed in the earthly Canaan, but as in a strange country; their mind being gone towards that other, which they sought. And accordingly you find it said of each of them, in their story, when they quite left this world, (as also of Moses and Aaron, afterwards,) that they were gathered to their people; a people that were more their own. And surely, as God (who was not ashamed to be called their God) is not the God of the dead, but of the living; we must understand this was not the congregation of the dead, to which these were gathered, otherwise than in a low, relative sense, as to us only and our world. Holy men, as they die out of one world, are born into another, to associate with them that dwell in light; and be joined to a glorious community above, the general assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; where all love and adore, praise and triumph together.

4. It is again to be taken into the state of this case, that we have, one way or other, actual present notices of both the states, which both sorts of objects, that stand in this competition belong unto. Of the one, by sense and experience; we so know what it is to live in the body, and in a sensible world, and among a corporeal people: of the other, by faith; by believing as we are told by one that we are sure can have no design or inclination to deceive us. There are many mansions, saith he, in my Father's house, as good accommodations, as suitable society (and sufficiently numerous, which the many mansions implies) to be sure as any you have met with here. Faith is, in this case, to serve us instead of eyes, it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of the things not seen; (Heb. xi. 1.) as we have the notion of a country where we have not been, by the description of a person whom we can trust, and that we think intends not to abuse us by forgeries, and false representations. In reference to this country, we walk and guide ourselves by sight, in our converses, and affairs wherein we have to do with it; as to that other, by faith; as, ver. 7. 'tis implied.

5. Yet further it is to be considered, that this body, and this bodily people and world, have the present possession of us. And though the spiritualized mind do as it were step forth, and place itself between both, when it is to make its choice; yet the objects of the one sort are much nearer, the other are far distant, and much more remote.

6. That it cannot but be apprehended, that though the one sort of things hath the faster hold, the other sort are things of greater value; the one hath the more entire present possession of us, the other, the better right. Thus we see the case stated.

II. We are next to show what the temper is of a holy soul (*i. e.* its proper and most genuine temper) in reference to this supposed state of the case. We are willing rather, or have a more complacential inclination to be unpeopled from the body, and this bodily sort of people; and to be peopled with the Lord, and that sort of incorporeal people, over which he more immediately presides in the upper world. He speaks comparatively, as the case requires, and because all comparison is founded in somewhat absolute; therefore a simple disposition, both ways, is supposed. Whence then,

1. This temper is not to despise and hate the body, it imports no disdainful aversion to it, or to this present state.

2. Nor is it an impetuous precipitant tendency towards the Lord, impatient of delay, mutinous against the divine disposal; or that declines present duty, and catches at the βραβεῖον, the crown and prize, before the prescribed race be run out. A holy man is at once dutiful and wise: as a servant he refuses not the obedience of life, and as a wise man,[a] embraces the gain of death.

3. But it is considerate, the effect of much foregoing deliberation, and of a thorough perspection of the case; εἰδότες, ver. 6. knowing, or considering, that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. This choice is not made blindly and in the dark.

4. It is very determinate and full, being made up of the mixture of fortitude and complacency, as was said; the one whereof copes with the evil, of being severed from the body; the other entertains the good of being present with the Lord. Therefore this is the sense of a pious soul in the present case: *q. d.* "I do indeed love this body well, and reckon it a grievous thing to be severed from it, if that part of the case be singly considered, and alone by itself; but considering it in comparison with the other part, what is this body to me? What is it as an object of love, in comparison of being with the Lord? What is death to me as an object of fear, in comparison of being absent from the Lord? which is a death many thousand times more deadly than the other.

III. The agreeableness of this temper to the general frame and complexion of a holy soul as such. Which will appear if we consider—1. What sort of frame or impression, in the general, that is that doth distinguish a sincerely pious person from another man.—2. The more eminent principles in particular that are constituent of it, and do as it were compose and make it up.

1. The general frame of a holy soul, as such is natural to it. 'Tis not an artificial thing, a piece of mechanism, a lifeless engine, nor a superficial, an external form, an evanid impression. It is the effect of a creation, (as Scripture often speaks,) by which the man become a new creature, and hath a nature peculiar to him, as other creatures have; or of regeneration, by which he is said to be born anew. Which forms of speech, whatever they have of dif-

[a] Ambros. de bono mortis.

ferent signification, do agree in this, that they signify a certain nature to be the thing produced. This nature is said to be divine, (2 Pet. i. 4.) somewhat born of God, as it is expressed, 1 John v. 4. and in many places more. And it is an intellectual nature, or the restored rectitude of such a being. Now who can think but what is so peculiarly from God, a touch and impress from him upon an intelligent subject, should with design, choice, and complacency, tend to him, and make the soul do so? especially, when it is so purposely designed for remedy of the apostacy, wherein men are revolted and gone off from him? Will he suffer himself to be defeated in a design, upon which he is so industriously intent? Or is it supposable the all-wise God should so mistake himself, as to do such a work upon the spirit of man, on set purpose for an end which it is no way apt to serve: yea, and when he now takes him in hand, a second time? Nor can it be but this impression of God upon the soul must have principal reference to our final state. It is a kind of nature, and must therefore tend to what is most perfect in its own kind. But we need not reason, in a matter wherein the word of God so plainly unfolds the scope and the success of this his own work. By it we are said to be alive to God, through Jesus Christ, (Rom. vi. 11.) to turn, and move, and act towards him, as many Scriptures speak. And towards him as he is most perfectly to be served, and enjoyed, in the most perfect state of life.

We are said to be begotten again to a lively hope, (1 Pet. i. 3. where hope is taken objectively, as the following words show,) to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And when, elsewhere, it hath been said, Every one that doth righteousness is born of him, 1 John ii. ult. there is immediately subjoined, chap. iii. 1, 2. a description of the future blessedness; whereto 'tis presently added, ver. 3. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure; implying the hope of that blessed state to be connate, implanted as a vital principle of the new and divine nature. And all hope, we know, involves desire in it; which is here intimated to be so powerful and prevailing, as to shape and form a man's whole course to an agreeable tenor; which it could not do, if hope were not superadded to desire; for no man pursues an end whereof he despairs. And what else is living religion, but a tendency to blessedness? a seeking honour, glory, and immortality, by a patient continuance in well doing, Rom. ii. 7. Nor need we look further than this context, for evidence that this divine impression upon the soul hath this reference; for when, ver. 4. the apostle had avowed the fervour of his desire after that state wherein mortality should be swallowed up of life, he immediately adds, ver. 5. Now he that hath wrought us for this self-same thing, is God, &c. And indeed, after that transforming touch, the great business of such a soul, in this world, is but a dressing itself for the Divine presence, a preparation for that state, wherein we are for ever to be with the Lord. And 'tis not only an incongruity, but an inconsistency; not only that which is not fit, but not possible, that a man should ever design that as his end, which he cares not ever to attain; or that for his last end, which he doth not supremely desire.

2. If we consider particular principles that belong to this holy divine nature, the more noble and eminent are faith and love. The former is the perceptive, visive principle; the other the motive, and fruitive. And these, though they have their other manifold references, have yet, both, their final to that state of absence from this body, and presence with the Lord; the one eyeing, the other coveting it, as that wherein the soul is to take up its final rest. Here some consideration should be had of objections, that some may be apt to make use of, to shift off the urgency of this truth, and excuse the unsuitable temper of their spirits to it.

(1.) That they are unassured about their states Godward; and how can they be willing to die, and be absent from the body, or not be afraid of the Lord's presence, whom they may, for aught they know, find an angry vindictive Judge when they appear before him?

Answer. This, which is the most considerable objection that the matter admits of, if it were directly pointed against this truth, as it hath been laid down, would answer itself. For it is not dying simply that is the object of this inclination, but dying conjunctly with being with the Lord, in his blessed joyous presence. Do not therefore divide the object, and that objection is no objection. You are unwilling to die, and be banished the Divine presence; but are you unwilling to die, and enjoy it? or, upon supposition you should, are you willing? This is all that we make characteristical, and distinguishing. Where there is only an aversion to leave this bodily life and state, upon a fear we shall not be admitted into that blessed presence; there is only an accidental obstruction to the more explicit, distinct, and discernible exertions of desire this way; which obstruction, if it be removed, the soul would then follow the course which the divine and holy principle in it doth naturally incline to: but the mortal token is, when there is no such doubt, and yet there is still a prevailing aversion; when men make no question, if they die they shall go to God, and yet they are not willing to go. In the former case, there is a supreme desire of being with God, only suspended; take off that suspension, and that desire runs its natural course. In the other case, there is no desire at all. And the difference is, as between a living man that would fain go to such a place, but he is held, and therefore goes not; and one that is not held, but is dead, and cannot stir at all. For the life of the soul towards God is love, aversion therefore is (not an absolute, but) respective death, or *quoad hoc*, a death towards him; or, as to this thing, *viz.* being with him.

(2.) As for the objection of being more serviceable to children, friends, relations, or the glory of God in the world, and his church in it; upon which last account this apostle, (Phil. i. 22, 23, 24.) though he express a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, yet is in a strait, and seems also very well pleased to abide in the flesh a longer time: he can himself best judge of our serviceableness. The meaning is not that we should be willing to leave the body before he would have us, but that we should not be unwilling then. And because we know not when his time will be, and it may be presently for aught we know; we should be always willing and desirous, upon that supposition. Our desire herein should not be absolute, and peremptory, but subordinate, and apt to be determined by his will; which can determine nothing but what will be most for his own glory, and for their best good who belong to him.

But as to this instance of the apostle, we must consider what there was peculiar in the apostle's case, and what is common, or ought to be, to all serious Christians. There is no doubt there was this more peculiar to him, (and to persons in such a capacity and station as his was,) *viz.* as he was an apostle, he was one that had seen the Lord, which was a qualification for the more special work of that office; whereupon he was an eye-witness, to testify of his resurrection; upon which so great a stress lay, in asserting the truth of the Christian religion, and propagating it with the greater assurance in the world. To testify as an apostle, therefore, could not be done by one of a following age. And 'tis very probable when he expresses, to the Philippians, (ver. 25.) his knowledge he should abide and continue yet longer with them all, *i. e.* with the Christian church in the world, (for we cannot suppose he was to continue at Philippi,) for the furtherance of the common cause of the Christian faith, which was their common joy, (and which would no doubt be increased intensively and extensively at once,) he had some secret intimation, that all his work in this kind was not yet over. Nor were such monitions and advertisements unfrequent with the apostles, that specially related to the circumstances of their work. And so entirely was he devoted to the Christian interest, that wherein he saw he might be so peculiarly serviceable to it, he expresses a well-pleasedness to be so, as well as a confidence that he should; as we all ought to do, in reference to any such significations of the Divine will concerning us, if they were afforded to us. But as to what there is, in this instance, that is common and imitable to the generality of Christians, it is no other than what we press from the text we have in hand: a desire to depart, and be with Christ, as that which is far better for us; submitted to the regulation of the Divine will, as to the time of our departure, and accompanied with a cheer-

ful willingness to serve him here to our uttermost in the mean time. But we have withal little reason to think we can do God greater service, or glorify him more here, than above. There is indeed other service to be done below, which is necessary in its own kind, and must, and shall, be done by some or other. But is our service fit, in point of excellency and value, to be compared with that of glorified spirits in the upper regions? We serve God by doing his will, which is, surely, most perfectly done above. And our glorifying him, is to acknowledge and adore his glorious excellencies: not to add the glory to him which he hath not; but to celebrate and magnify that which he hath: whereof certainly the large minds of glorified creatures are far more capable. He never needs hands for any work he hath to do, but can form instruments as he pleases. And what is our little point of earth, or any service that can be performed by us here, in comparison of the spacious heavens, and the noble employments of those glorious orders of creatures above, which all bear their parts in the great affairs of the vast and widely-extended heavenly kingdom? We might as well suppose, that because there is, in a prince's family, employment below stairs for cooks, and butlers, or such like underlings; that therefore their service is more considerable than that of great officers, and ministers of state.

3. And for what may be thought, by some, that this seems an unnatural inclination; we must understand what we say, and what our own nature is, when we talk of what is natural or unnatural to us. Ours is a compounded nature, that is not simply unnatural, that is contrary to an inferior nature, and agreeable to a superior. The most deeply fundamental law, of the intellectual nature in us, was to be most addicted to the supreme good. The apostacy of this world from God, and its lapse into carnality, is its most unnatural state. To have an inclination to the body is natural, but to be more addicted to it than to God, is most contrary to the sincere dictates of original, pure, and primitive nature.

There are now, for our use, many things to be inferred.

1. We see here, from the immediate connexion between being absent from the body, and present with the Lord, there is no place for the intervening sleep of the separate soul. Can such a presence with the Lord, as is here meant, consist with sleeping? or is sleeping more desirable than the converse with him our present state admits? But of this, much is said elsewhere.

2. Death is not so formidable a thing as we commonly fancy. We are confident and willing rather. There is a fortitude that can oppose the terrors of death, and overcome. How many have we known die triumphing!

3. We see that men of spiritual minds have another notion of that which we call self, or personality, than is vulgar and common. For who are the *we* that speak of being absent from the body, and present with the Lord? The body seems excluded that notion, which we know cannot be absent from itself. How like in sound is this to *Animus cujusque in quisque!* or, *That the soul is the man!* I would not indeed drive this so high as some Platonists are wont to do, as if the man were nothing else but a soul, sometimes using a body. Nor do therefore think the body is no more to him, than our clothes to the body, because the apostle in this context uses that similitude; for that is not to be conceived otherwise, than (as is usual in such illustrations) with dissimilitude. A vital union must be acknowledged; only neither is it agreeable with their self-debasing thoughts, that seem to make the body the more considerable part of themselves, that measure good and evil by it, as if what were grateful to the body were simply good for them, and that which offends the body simply evil; that speak or think of themselves, as if they were all body, forget that there is belonging to them an ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος, as well as an ὁ ἔξω, an *inner man*, and an *outer;* that the latter may be decaying, when the other is renewed day by day; (2 Cor. iv. 16.) that the Father of our spirits may often see cause to let our flesh suffer (and, at last, perish) for the advantage of our spirits, Heb. xii. 9, 10. So distinct are their interests and gratifications, and sometimes inconsistent. When men make therefore this bodily brutal self their centre and end, how sordid and unchristian is their temper! and how reprovable by some more noble-minded pagans, that had better learned the precept inculcated by some of them, of reverencing themselves! Of whom we find one[b] speaking, with a sort of disdain, Is this body I? Another[c] saying, he might be killed and not hurt; and upbraiding to his friends their ignorance, when they inquired how he would be buried; as if he could be buried, who, he said, should be gone far enough out of their hands. Another;[d] that the tyrant that made him to be beaten to death with iron mallets, might break that vessel of his, but himself he could not touch.

4. We learn, that when God removes any of our dear godly friends and relatives out of the body, though he displease us, he highly pleases them; for 'tis that they desire rather. And we are sure he pleases himself; for what can induce him, or make it possible to him, to do any thing against his own pleasure? We are too apt to consider our own interest and satisfaction apart from theirs and God's, in such cases. And hence is that too vulgar and practical error, among very many serious Christians; that when such as are dear to them are taken away, they reckon their thoughts to be principally employed, in considering such a thing as afflictive or punitive to them. 'Tis true that the affliction of that, as well as of any other kind, should put us upon very serious inquiry and search what the sin is, that may more especially have deserved it. But that ought upon all occasions to be principally considered, in any case, that is principal. As God did not make such a creature principally to please me, so nor doth he take away such a one principally to displease me. God's interest is supreme, their own next, mine comes after both the other. Therefore when the stream of thoughts and affections hath run principally, in such a case, upon our own affliction, 'tis time to check it, and begin to consider, with some pleasure, how the Lord and that translated soul are now pleased in one another! He hath his end upon his own creature, and it hath its end and rest in him.

5. We see the admirable power of divine grace, that it prevails against even the natural love of this bodily life; not where discontent and weariness of life contribute; but even where there is a willingness to live too, upon a valuable consideration, as this apostle doth elsewhere express himself, *viz.* in the place before noted: and how easily the Divine pleasure could reconcile him to life, notwithstanding what is said in the text, is sufficiently signified in the words immediately following it. And the effect is permanent, not a sudden transport (wherein many are induced to throw away their lives upon much lower motives:) this appears to be an habitual inclination. At distant times, we find the apostle in the same temper. That is not surely from the power of nature, that is so much against it, as the stream of nature now runs, *i. e.* that a man should be willing to be plucked in pieces, and severed from himself! And we see, (ver. 5.) whereto it is expressly ascribed: He that hath wrought us to the self-same thing, is God.

6. How black is their character, and how sad their state, that are more addicted to the body, and this bodily life, than to the Lord, and that holy blessed life we are to partake in with him! Their character is black and horrid, as it is diverse from that which truly belongs to all the people of God, that ever lived on earth; and so doth distinguish them from such, and place them among another sort of men that belong not to him; such as have their portion in this life, their good things here, and who are to expect nothing hereafter, but wo and wailing. And who would not be affrighted, that finds a mark upon him that severs him from the whole assembly of the just, and the blessed! Their state is also therefore sad and dismal, inasmuch as what they place their highest felicity in (their abode in the body) they know will continue but a little while. Who could ever, by their love of this bodily life, procure it to be perpetuated? or by their dread of mortality, make themselves immortal? Have not others, in all former ages, loved the body and this world as much? and what is become of them? Hath not death still swept the stage from generation to generation? and taken all away, willing or unwilling? To have all my good bound up in what I cannot keep! and to be in a continual dread of what I cannot avoid! what can be more disconsolate? How grievous

b Epict. c Socrat. d Anaxarch.

will it be to be torn out of the body! not to resign the soul, but have it drawn forth as a rusty sword out of the sheath; a thing which our utmost unwillingness will make the more painful, but cannot defer! No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, nor hath he power in death, Eccles. viii. 8. How uncomfortable, when the Lord's presence, the common joy of all good souls, is to me a dread! By the same degrees, by which an abode in the body is over-desired, is that presence dreadful and disaffected. And how deplorate is the case, when this body is the best shelter I have from that presence! Would I lurk in the body and be hid from the presence of the Lord? How easily and how soon will my fortress be beaten down and laid in the dust! and I be left naked and exposed! and then how fearful things do ensue! But what now, doth this fearful case admit of no remedy? It can admit but of this only one, which therefore I would now recommend and press, the serious effectual endeavour of being, to a just degree, alienated from the body, and of having the undue love repressed and wrought down, of this bodily life. Mistake not, I go not about to persuade all promiscuously, out of hand and without more ado, to desire death, or absence from the body. The desires of reasonable creatures should be reasonable, the product of valuable considerations and rational inducements. The present case of too many, the Lord knows, admits not they should be willing to die; who are they that they should desire the day of the Lord? a day of such gloominess and darkness, as it is likely, should it now dawn, to prove to them? No, but let all endeavour to get into that state, and have their affairs in such a posture, that they may be, upon good terms, reconciled to the grave; and that separation from the body may be the matter, with them, of a rational and truly Christian choice. And since, as hath been said, there are two terms between which the inclination and motion of our souls, in this case, must lie, from the one to the other, *viz.* the body, and the Lord, life in the body, and with the Lord; let such things be considered on both hands, as may justly tend to diminish and lessen our inclination and love to the one, and increase it towards the other. So as that, all things being considered, and upon the whole, this may be the reasonable and self-justifying result, to be well pleased rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. And,

(1.) On the part of the body and this bodily life, consider, how costly it is to you! You lay out upon it (the most do) most of your time, thoughts, cares; the greater part, most, or even all, of your estates. All the callings you can think of in the world, and which all help to maintain at no little expense, are wholly for the body; what costly attendants must it have of cooks, bakers, brewers, mercers, physicians, lawyers, and what not! one only excepted that refers to the soul. And again, when all is done, how little serviceable is it! when you would employ it, sometimes it is sick, sometimes lame, sometimes lames the mind and intellect too, that it cannot do its office, merely through the distemper of bodily organs; is at all times dull, sluggish, indisposed; the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak.

Yea moreover how disserviceable! hinders you doing good, prompts to the doing much evil. What a world of mischief is done among men, merely by bodily lusts, and to serve fleshly appetite; these fill the world with confusion, and miseries of all sorts. All catch from others what they can, for the service of the body; hence is competition of interests and designs; no man's portion is enough for him to serve the body, (or the mind, as it is depraved by bodily inclinations,) and so the world is torn by its inhabitants, countries wasted and laid desolate; religion itself made subservient to fleshly interest, and thence is the occasion of many a bloody contest, of oppressions, persecutions, and violences; whereby many times it so falls out, that such as are most vigorously engaged in the design of serving the body, destroy it, their own as well as other men's. And (which is most dreadful) souls are numerously lost and perish in the scuffle, yea, and very oft upon the account or pretence of religion, whose only design it is to save souls! And how many, to save their bodies, destroy even their own souls! Not having learned that instruction of our Saviour's, not to fear them that can only kill the body; or being unable to suffer some lesser bodily inconveniences, apostatize, and abandon their religion, whereby that, and their souls too, become sacrifices to the safety and accommodation of an idolized lump of clay! And how certainly (if a seasonable repentance do not intervene) do they, who only thus tempt the souls of other men, destroy their own! nor can it be doubted at this time of day, and after the experience of so many ages, wherein Christianity hath been so visibly and grossly carnalized, but that it is a religion perverted to the support of the bodily and animal interest, that hath thus embroiled the Christian world. How plain is it, that they who desire to make a fair show in the flesh, to strut in pomp, to glitter in secular grandeur and splendour, to live in unrebuked sensual ease and fulness, are the men that would constrain others to their carnal observances! men that serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies. Who can think it is pure love to souls, and zeal for the true ends of the holy, peaceable religion of our blessed Jesus, that makes them so vexatious and troublesome to all, whom their fleshly arm can reach and ruin, and whom their spirit and way cannot allure and win? Who that understands religion, and the true design of it, and the blessed end wherein it will shortly terminate, would not be glad to be rescued out of this large diffusive unquiet empire of the body, that extends itself over all things, mingling its odious impurities, even with what is most sacred! Who would not long to be from under this reign of the beast, if he might have a fair way for escape! And where religion is not in the case, what multitudes of terrene creatures, earthly-minded men, are stupidly going down to perdition daily, and destroying their souls by mere neglect, while they are driving designs for the body! Which yet, in the mean time, is at the best but a prison to the best of souls. O how could they love God, admire and praise him, were they once out of this body! But it is not enough to a subject, wherein love is implanted and is a part of its nature, to have only the prospect of what is unlovely, or be told only what is not to be loved. There must be somewhat to invite and draw, as well as to repel and drive off. Therefore,

(2.) Consider also, on the other part, the Lord, and that life you are to transact and live with him. Little can now be said; you are not ignorant where much is, and your own thoughts may, upon much conversing with the holy oracles, suggest yet more. And you have need to use your thoughts here, the more largely, where your sense doth not instruct you, as on the other part it doth. Consider the description which you are copiously furnished with, both of him and of the state in which you are to be present with him. Recount his glorious excellencies, his immense and all-sufficient fulness, his wisdom, power, holiness, and love in absolute perfection. Consider his high, equal, comely, amiable regency over the blessed community above, that spiritual incorporeal people, the pleased joyful inhabitants of the celestial regions. And that he rules over them and communicates himself universally to them, in a state of perfect light, purity, peace, love, and pleasure, that is also immutable, and never to know end. There is nothing capable of attracting an intellectual nature, which is not here!

But on both parts, suffer yourselves to be directed also.

[1.] Take heed of over-indulging the body, keep it in subjection, use it, and serve it not. Primitive nature, and the Creator's wise and holy pleasure, ordained it to serve. Lose not yourselves in it, take heed you be not buried where you should but dwell, and that you make not your mansion your grave. Mansion, do I say? Call it as this apostle doth, and another, (2 Pet. i.) your tabernacle only, a tent-pitched for you, but for a little while. Every day look upon it, and without fond pity, as destined to rottenness and corruption; and as that which, when it ceases to be your clothing, must be worms meat. Labour to make the thoughts easy and familiar to yourselves of leaving it, think it not an uncouth thing. How doth that part of the creation, that is inferior to you, abound with like instances! of fruits springing up out of this earth, and growing to ripeness and maturity, with husks, shells, or other integuments, which then fall off; such as never ripen, they and their enfoldings rot together. Esteem it your perfection, when your shell will fall off easily, and cleaves not so close,

as to put you to pain when it is to be severed from you.

Endeavour the holy and heavenly nature may grow more and more mature in you; so death will be the more also an unregretted thing to your thoughts. By all means labour to overcome the fear of it; which that you might, our Lord also took a body. Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, Heb. ii. 14, 15. Reckon not much of that fear, which is only the mere regret of sensitive nature, purely involuntary; and that can no more obey the empire of the mind, or be regulated by it, than you can make straight a crooked leg by a mere act of your will, or make your body not feel pain: a fear, from which the perfection of our nature, in our blessed Lord himself, was not exempt. But it is one thing to extinguish even that fear, another to overcome it; the former is impossible to you, the latter necessary. It is overcome, when a superior principle governs you and your resolutions and course, as it did our Lord; he did not, because of it, spare himself and decline dying. You may feel perhaps somewhat of such a fear (a secret shrug) when you are to be let blood, or have a wound searched. It governs not in such a less important case, when, being convinced it is requisite, you omit not the thing notwithstanding. Labour herein to be hardy, and merciless to this flesh, upon the fore-thoughts of the time when God will allow you to step forth, and go out of the body; and say to it, with an obdured mind, For all thy craving, and shrinking, thou shalt be thrown off.

Labour it may not only not be the matter of your prevailing fear, but be the matter of your hope. Look towards the approaching season, with pleasant cheerful expectation; aspire (as it belongs to you to do, who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, that blessed Spirit of adoption) and groan for the adoption, (the season of your being more solemnly owned for sons,) *viz.* the redemption of the body, Rom. viii. 23. Which though it ultimately refer to the resurrection, may be allowed to have an incomplete meaning, in reference to death too; for I see not but ἀπολύτρωσις τοῦ σώματος, may admit such a construction, as ἀπολύτρωσις τῶν παραβάσεων, Heb. ix. 15. *i. e.* that redemption of the body may mean redemption from it, wherein it is burdensome, a grievance and penalty, here, as well as there. The redemption of transgressions doth truly mean liberation from the penalty of them; from which penal evil of and by the body, so materially, at least, it is, we are not perfectly freed, as our blessedness is not perfect, till mortality be swallowed up of life, and all the adopted, the many sons, be all brought to glory together.

How happy in the mean time is your case, when death becomes the matter of your rational, well-grounded hope! You have many hopes, wherein you are liable to disappointment; you will then have one sure hope, and that will be worth them all; none can prevent you of this hope. Many other things you justly hope for, are hindered by ill-minded men of their accomplishment; but all the wit and power of your most spiteful enemies can never hinder you from dying. And how are you fenced against all the intervening troubles of life! *Nihil metuit qui optat mori, You have nothing to fear, if you desire to die;* nothing but what, at least, death will shortly put an end to. Make this your aim, to have life for the matter of your patience, and death of your desire.

[2.] On the other part also, labour to be upon good terms with the Lord, secure it that he be yours. Your way to that is short and expedite, the same by which we become his, Ezek. xvi. 8. I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. Solemnly and unfeignedly accept him, and surrender yourselves; without this who can expect but to hear from him at last, Depart from me, I know you not? Know of yourselves, demand an account, are you sincerely willing to be his? and to take him for yours without limitation or reserves? Matters are then agreed between him and you, and who can break or disannul the agreement? Who can come between him and you? I often think of the high transport wherewith those words are uttered, The excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, Phil. iii. 8. This is Christian religion, not in a system, but as it is a vital principle and habit in the soul, inclining us, making us propense, towards our blessed Lord, addicting and subduing us to him, uniting us with him, whereby we come to know by inward sensations, to feel the transfusions of his spiritual light and influence, and our souls thereby caught, and bound up in the bundle of life. So we have Christ formed within, his holy truth, doctrines, precepts, promises, inwrought into the temper of our spirits. And, as it follows in that context, Phil. iii. to have him, according to the states wherein he successively was, by correspondent impressions represented in us; so as that we come to bear the image of him, crucified and dying, first; then, reviving and rising; and afterwards, ascending and glorified. To know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; if, by any means, we might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, ver. 10, 11.

Let us not be at rest till we find it thus, in some measure, with us. If we feel ourselves, after this manner, internally and initially conformed to him, this will be both a preparative, and a pledge of our future perfect conformity, both internal, and external. It will fit us to be ever with the Lord, and assure us we shall and can be no where else; that he and we shall not to eternity dwell asunder. We shall neither fear to be externally conformed to him in his death, to quit and lay down the body as he did; nor despair of attaining with him the resurrection from the dead, and of being present with him in glory. Or, that he shall recover for us, out of the dust, our vile abject bodies, (the τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν,) the body of our humiliation, wherein we were humbled, as he was in his, (as it follows in that, Phil. iii. ver. 21.) and make it like his own glorious body, (σύμμορφον, conform, and agreeable,) by that power, by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself. In the mean time, as this present state admits, converse much with him every day; be not strangers to him, often recognise and renew your engagements to him. Revolve in your thoughts his interest in you, and yours in him; and the nearer relation there is between him and you, than that between you and this body. Recount with yourselves the permanency and lastingness of that relation; that whereas this body, as now it is a terrestrial body, will not be yours long; he is to be your God for ever and ever; that though death must shortly separate you from this body, neither life nor death, principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come, shall ever separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. While this body is a body of death to you, he is your life, your hope, and your exceeding joy, your better, more laudable, and more excellent self, more intimate to you than you can be to yourself, as hath been anciently and often said, and for the obtaining whose presence, absence from the body is a very small matter.

A great prince,[e] in an epistle to that philosopher, tells him: I seem to myself not to be a man, as the saying is, while I am absent from Iamblicus, or while I am not conversant (ὁν σοφῷ) with him. That we can better endure our Lord's absence, is surely a thing itself not to be endured; we should labour, that our acquaintance with him (such as is fit to be between so great a majesty and such mean creatures as we) should grow daily. Yea, and endeavour to make the thoughts more familiar to ourselves of spiritual beings in the general; for we are to serve and converse with him in a glorious community of such creatures, An innumerable company of angels, the general assembly, and the church of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect, (Heb. xii. 23.) in a region where an earthly body, remaining such, can have no place. Why do we make the thoughts of a spirit, out of a body, so strange to ourselves? We meet with hundreds of spirits in bodies, and moving bodies to and fro in the streets every day, and are not startled at it. Is a body so much nearer akin to us than a spirit, that we must have so mean a thing to come between, to mediate and reconcile us to it? Why are we afraid of what we are so nearly allied unto? Can we not endure to see or think of a man at liberty (suppose it were

e Julian Ep. ad Iamblic.

a friend, or a brother) if we ourselves were in prison? The more easy you make the apprehension to yourselves of a disembodied spirit, *i. e.* free, I mean, of any terrestrial body, the better we shall relish the thoughts of him who is the head of that glorious society you are to be gathered unto; for the Lord is that Spirit, the eminent, almighty, and all-governing Spirit, (to be ever beheld too in his glorified body, as an eternal monument of his under taking for us, and an assuring endearment of his relation to us;) the better your minds will comply with the preconceived idea we are to entertain ourselves with, of the constitution, order, employment, and delights of that vast collection of heavenly associates we shall dwell with for ever. And the more will you still incline to be absent from this body, that (among them) you may be ever present with the Lord.

And if you thus cherish this pleasant inclination, think how grateful it will be, when it comes to be satisfied! How natural is that rest that ends in the centre, to which a thing is carried by a natural motion! How pleasantly doth the departed soul of that good gentlewoman, whose decease we lament, solace itself in the presence of her glorious Lord! I shall say little concerning her; you will have her just memorial more at large ere long. I had indeed the opportunity, by an occasional abode some days under the same roof, (several years before she came into that relation wherein she finished her course,) to observe her strangely vivid and great wit, and very sober conversation. But the turn and bent of her spirit towards God and heaven more remarkably appeared a considerable time after; which when it did, she showed how much more she studied the interest of her soul than the body; and how much more she valued mental and spiritual excellencies than worldly advantages, in the choice of her consort, whom she accepted to be the companion and guide of her life.

She gave proof herein of the real greatness of her spirit, and how much she disdained to be ghided by their vulgar measures that have not wit, and reason, and religion enough to value the accomplishments of the mind, and inner man; and to understand that knowledge, holiness, a heavenly heart, entire devotedness to the Redeemer, a willingness to spend and be spent in the service of God, are better and more valuable things, than so many hundreds or thousands a year. And that no external circumstances can so far dignify a drunkard, an atheist, a profane wretch, as that (compared with one that bears such character) he should deserve to be simply reckoned the better man. And that mere sober carnality and ungodliness suffice not to cast the balance; or that have so little of these qualifications for the making a true judgment, as to think that calling dishonourable and a diminution to a man, that refers immediately to the soul, and the unseen world, and that relates and sets him nearest to God.

She knew how to make her estimate of the honour of a family, and a pedigree, as things valuable in their kind; without allowing herself so much vanity, as to reckon they were things of the most excellent kind, and to which nothing personal could be equal. And well understood, of the personal endowments of the body, and the mind, which were to have the preference. Her life might teach all those, especially of her own sex, that a life's time in the body, is for some other purposes than to indulge, and trim, and adorn the body; which is most minded by them, who (as that shows) have, in the mean time, most neglected, and, God knows, most depraved and deformed souls. I hope her example, more fully and publicly represented, will more generally teach: in the mean time, this instance of our common mortality should teach us all. We see this state of life in the body is not that we were finally made for; yet how few seriously look beyond it! And it is amazing to think how little the deaths of others signify, to the making us mind our own. We behave ourselves as if death were a thing only to be undergone by some few persons, here and there; and that the most should escape, and as if we took it for granted we should be of the exempted number. How soon are impressions, from such occasions, talked, and trifled, and laughed, and jested away! Shall we now learn more to study and understand our own natures? to contemplate ourselves, and our duty thereupon? that we are a mortal, immortal sort of creatures? that we are sojourners only in a body, which we must shortly leave to dust and worms? that we are creatures united with bodies, but separable from them? Let each of us think, "I am one that can live in a body, and can live out of a body. While I live in one, that body is not mine, I dwell not in mine own:" that the body must be for the Lord, as he will then be for the body; that we shall dwell comfortless and miserable in the body, if we dwell in it solitary and alone, and have not with us a better inhabitant: that our bodies are to be mansions for a Deity, houses for religion, temples of the Holy Ghost. O the venerable thoughts we should have of these bodies upon this account! how careful should we be not to debase them, not to alienate them! If any man corrupt the temple of God, him will he destroy, 1 Cor. iii. 16. Will a man rob God? break and violate his house? How horrid a burglary! Shall we agree to resign these bodies, and this bodily life? Our meeting will have been to good purpose, might this be the united sense of this dissolving assembly: "Lord, here we surrender and disclaim (otherwise than for and under thee) all right and title to these bodies and lives of ours. We present our bodies holy, acceptable, living sacrifices, as our reasonable service." Let us do so, and remember we are hereafter not to live to ourselves, nor to die, at length, to ourselves, but living and dying to be the Lord's.

A FUNERAL SERMON

ON THE DEATH OF

MRS. JUDITH HAMMOND.

TO THE REV. MR. HAMMOND.

My offering this discourse to the eye of the world, together with your own, shows how great power our ancient friendship hath given you over me; whereof I have the less unpleasant sense, believing you will understand it so; who, in great part, know how difficult my circumstances made it to me to comply with your desire herein. Your opinion of the fitness of publishing so uncomposed a thing, discovers how far you were subject also to the same power; whose judgment I am a little apt to distrust, where it meets not with this bias.

It will be a joy to me, if it help to mitigate your sorrow, which is in great part justified by the greatness of your loss, in being separated, after so long conversation, from so excellent a consort, that lived in this world so much above it.

I reckon it an evidence of the real greatness of her spirit, that she thought that so little a thing, wherein others place greatness; and that in almost forty years' acquaintance with you both, I should never hear of her nearness to a noble family, till, occasionally, since her death. It seems the blood that filled her veins, did not swell her mind. And her heavenly birth and relation to the house and family of God, made her forget her earthly kindred, and parents' house.

Sir, though whom God hath joined together no man might put asunder; yet when he that made the union, makes the separation, there is no saying to him, What dost thou? We must awhile tug with the difficulties of our state, and work; wherein the hope of helping some (as God shall graciously help us) to gain this victory over death, and of being at length, through his grace, victors ourselves, will be a constant relief and support to you, and

Your very respectful brother,
and fellow-servant in the labours of the Gospel,
J. H.

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1 CORINTHIANS XV. 54.

—DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.

The foregoing words signify this saying to have been before written elsewhere. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up, &c. And we find it before written, (Isa. xxv. 8.) in express words, and (Hos. xiii. 14.) in such as are equivalent. What their dependance or meaning is, in either of those places, cannot be discussed within our present narrow limits. Only it is sufficiently manifest, that sundry passages in the Holy Scriptures are said to be brought to pass, over and over, once and again; as that of Rachel's weeping for her children; and of God's bringing his Son out of Egypt; with divers others. This great saying may have had some partial and gradual accomplishment, within the current of time, when in reference to a people more specially related to God, and in some more notable delinquency and defection from him, he may have given a just, but limited commission to death, to make great ravage and destructions among them; so that it hath even rode in triumph, made a huge carnage, strewed their country with carcasses, turned their rich land, more enriched with human blood, into an Aceldama, and thereupon, but into a place of sepulture and of graves; and yet, when it hath gone as far as his designed limits, and executed all his pleasure, he may have stopped it in its career, and said, Hither thou shalt come, and no further, now, cease and give over, (as Hos. xiii. 14.) and so may have ransomed the residue from the power of the grave, and been the destruction of their destroyers, plaguing them who were their plagues. This, in the next intention hereof, may respect the people of the Jews, who being returned from their (now foreseen) captivity, might in the prophetic style be spoken of as a people risen from the dead, and newly sprung up out of the grave; but might have a further reference to the yet future state of the Christian church, as Isa. xxv. 6, 7, 8. seems to carry it; when so great a death as hath long been upon it, as well as the rest of the world, it may be hoped shall be swallowed up in a very glorious victory! But this saying is introduced here, as having its final and ultimate completion, in conjunction with what is mentioned besides, in this context, *viz.* when in the close and shutting up of time the trumpet shall sound, as we are told elsewhere it shall at the coming of our Lord, and the dead (those that died in him first, 1 Thess. iv. 16.) be raised, the living changed, so as to bear his, the heavenly Adam's, image; when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality; then shall be brought to pass this saying, (whatever preludes thereto, as was written, there may have been before,) Death is swallowed up in victory.

And according to this its fullest sense, is this saying to be the subject of our present consideration. The expression is highly rhetorical; but there is a most rational, solid sense intended under it; for which no words can be too big or of too great a sound. Our business must be to explain, and apply this saying. And,

I. For explication of its rational import, we shall show, —1. The import,—2. The reasonableness, of it.

1. It imports, in general, God's determination to put a perpetual end to death, to make it cease *in perpetuum*, as a noted expositor expresses it,[a] showing that the parallel Hebrew phrase is usually rendered, for ever, 2 Sam. ii. 26. Jer. iii. 5. and in divers other places. But that we may

a Grot. in loc. נצח לנצח εἰς νῖκος.

give a more distinct account of its meaning, several things are to be noted:

(1.) That death, as it is here spoken of, supposes a certain limited subject. Its being mentioned in this chapter, and elsewhere, as if it were itself a *suppositum* and an intelligent designing one, is an elegant and a usual figure. The Holy Scriptures and common speech abound with this sort of *prosopopœia;* and it hath its special usefulness, when (as in the present case) what we are more to remark, and consider with greater intention of mind, is so represented, *i. e.* when to things of minute, or of no entity, but of great concernment, (such mere privations as death, or sin,) a sort of personality is ascribed, attended with terrible aspects and appearances; it tends more effectually to rouse our minds, and engage our attention, whether we are to consider and magnify our danger by them, or our deliverance, and to behold them as attempting upon us, or as overcome. But speaking strictly, we must take things as in themselves they are. Death therefore must be considered in reference to some subject or other. Abstractly considered, 'tis but a notion. As it actually hath taken place, it must be the death of this or that person. And as it is finally to be overcome, and have an end, it must have a limited subject, and not be understood of all, absolutely and universally; for then there would be no such thing as eternal death, which hath no end. And how the subject, here supposed, is to be limited; the series of discourse, through the chapter, shows they are such as are Christ's, (ver. 23.) and to whom he is peculiarly the first-fruits, (ibid.) such as shall bear his heavenly image, (ver. 49.) and, as elsewhere, whose vile bodies shall be made like his glorious one, (Phil. iii. 21.) such as shall have spiritual, incorruptible, immortal bodies like his, and with him inherit the kingdom of God, and through him obtain this victory, ver. 50—57.

(2.) This limitation of death to be overcome, to such a subject only, connotes the extent of it to the whole of that subject, as that is composed of an inner and an outer man, 2 Cor. iv. 16. It were frigid and comfortless to suppose, if it were supposable, that this glorious conquest of death should extend no further than the giving us a fair specious outside; and that our mind and spirit should not partake, or be nothing the better for it. 'Tis plain the apostle's scope through this chapter is more to assert the future subsistence of the soul, than the recomposure of the body, as his arguments show; though what was necessary to be said concerning the future state of that also, is not neglected. But what he is now saying, in this part of the chapter, concerns not what is common to men, but what is peculiar to good and holy men. And therefore, as it respects their nobler part, must intend more than its mere subsistence in another state, which is common to good and bad, and signify the perfection of the holy divine life, which shall be at last entirely victorious, and swallow up death, in its utmost extent, and specially as it was opposite to that life. Death, I mean, as it was so heavily incumbent upon the minds and spirits of good men themselves, and was their most intolerable burden: extorting from them such groans as that, Rom. vii. 24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death! Nor indeed is this death sensible or grievous, or ever felt, but where the opposite life hath some place. Total death knows no grievances, makes no complaints. They that lie buried in the earth, are in their own element, where no such thing weighs upon them; a terrene carnal mind is no burden to such souls, as are quite dead in trespasses and sins. I hope I need not tell you, that though the souls of men are universally immortal in the natural sense, they are not so in the moral. Morality comprehends the means and end, virtue and felicity; or in terms more agreeable to our Christian ethics, or that are oftener heard by them that live under the Gospel, holiness and blessedness. These are signified by spiritual life, or life in the spiritually moral sense; and so are sin and misery, by the opposite death. And no man hath reason to think it strange, that life and death are estimated by such measures; or that a temper of spirit, habitually and fixedly good or evil, should be signified by being alive, or dead, if we consider how perfect an equivalency there is between them in the moral sense, and being naturally alive or dead. For wherein do we usually state the notion of natural life, but in a self-moving power? Now let any ordinary understanding be appealed to in the case, and who would not say it were as good not to be able to move at all, as to move in so perpetual disorder, as never to attain any end such motion should serve for. The ends of a reasonable creature's motions must be duty to its Maker, and felicity to itself. If all its motions be such as import constant hostility towards God, infelicity and torment to itself; this is to be dead, not simply and naturally, 'tis true, but respectively, and not in some by, and less considerable respect, but in respect of the principal and most important purposes of life. So that in full equivalency, such a one is as dead, to all valuable intents and purposes whatsoever. Therefore such are only said to be alive in a true and the most proper sense, that are alive to God through Jesus Christ, (Rom. vi. 11.) or that do yield themselves to God as those that are alive from the dead, (ver. 13.) it being the proper business of their life to serve God, and enjoy him. Others that only live in sinful pleasure, are dead while they live, 1 Tim. v. 6. Nor hath such a notion of life and death been altogether strange, even among heathens, when we find it said by one of no mean note, "That a wicked man is dead, as a soul may be said to die;[b] and to it, 'tis a death, when 'tis (too deeply)[c] plunged, immersed into the body, so as to be sunk down into matter, and replete with it." (Besides much more that might be produced from others of like import.) And how agreeable is this passage to that, Rom. viii. 6. To be carnally minded is death.

Upon the whole, I cannot indeed conceive, that since death is often taken, and that most reasonably, in so great a latitude, as to admit of comprehending this sense; and since, in these latter verses, the apostle is speaking of a final deliverance from it, as the special privilege of such as are in union with Christ, not of what is common to all men, but that victory over death in this respect, as it imports aversion from God, or indisposition towards him, must be within his meaning, and that he was far from confining it to bodily death only, or from intending, in reference to the soul, the mere natural immortality of that alone: but that death, in its utmost latitude, was now, in reference to this sort of men whom his present discourse intends, to be entirely swallowed up in victory, or in a perfect plenitude of victorious life, as 2 Cor. v. 4. So much, which was more requisite to be insisted on, being clear, we shall less need to enlarge upon what follows. As that,

(3.) This victory supposes a war; or that life and death were before in a continued struggle. So we find the case is, even this lower world is full of vitality. Yet death hath spread itself through it, and cast over it a dark and dismal shadow every where, according as sin, which introduced it, is diffused and spread. Death is therefore mentioned as an enemy, ver 26. And so we understand it; natural death as an enemy to nature; spiritual, to grace. In the body, numerous maladies, and round about it, multitudes of adverse rencounters, are striving to infer death. In and about the mind and spirit, worse diseases and temptations have the like tendency. Temptations, I say, the mention whereof was not to be omitted, as pointing at the tempter, the wicked one, who first brought sin and death into this world of ours. And who is (though the concealed) the first and most proper seat of the enmity, which gives death the denomination of an enemy; which is so called indefinitely, the last enemy, that we might not understand it to be our enemy only, but more an enemy against God than us, from whom the spiteful apostate aimed and gloried to pluck away, and bury in death and ruin, the whole race of human creatures. In the mean time nature in all, and grace in the regenerate, are counter-striving. In the former, the self-preserving principle is more sensibly vigorous, but less successful; but they who are born of God, are better assisted by their Divine keeper, in subordination to whom they are enabled effectually to keep themselves, that the wicked one (mortally) touches them not, (1 John v. 18.) but, as must be supposed, not without continual watching and striving, as in war is usual.

(4.) Where such a war and striving end not in victory on the one side, they end in victory on the other. This is

b Ως αν ψυχη θανοι.

c Βεβαπτισμενη. Plotin. Enn. 1.

consequent upon what hath been said, of the limited subject here spoken of. Death is not universally overcome, with some it is left to be conceived therefore as a conqueror. We see how it is with the two hemispheres of our globe, when in the one, the light is chasing the darkness of the foregoing night, and we behold the morning gradually spreading itself upon the mountains, and it shines brighter and brighter unto perfect day; so in the other a feebler light doth more and more retire and yield, till at length it be quite swallowed up in the victorious darkness of a black and horrid midnight. 'Tis much after the same rate here, with this difference, that vicissitudes and alternations cease; and whether darkness and the shadow of death, or the light of life, be finally victorious, they are so, as hath been said, for ever. With the one sort, *i. e.* with the righteous, a vital light arises in the midst of darkness; a type of their spiritual, and a prelude to their eternal, state. They have a quickening light within, under all clouds of present ignominy and trouble, and an eternal day awaits them. Now death worketh in them, and surrounds them on every side, for awhile, and gains a temporary victory over their bodily life; which while it is doing, and their outward man is perishing, their inward man is renewed day by day. But at length even that vanquished life revives, and that more noble life, which is hid with Christ in God, (Col. iii. 3.) and of which he says, That whosoever lives, and believes in him, shall never die, (John xi. 26.) becomes perfect, for it is pure life; as that is said to be pure, which is *plenum sui, et minimum habet alieni, full of itself, without mixture of any thing alien from it;* having quite swallowed up whatsoever was opposite or disagreeable. So doth life, in the several kinds and degrees of it, flourish with them in a permanent, perpetual, and most consistent state. And as regal power is often founded in just conquest, they do even reign in life, by Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 17—21. But for the other sort, that sorry, pitiful, dying life they have, wherein they are even dead while they live, will be swallowed up in a victorious, eternal death; in which there remains to them a perpetual night, and the blackness of darkness for ever. We are next to consider,

2. The reasonableness of the divine determination, which this saying imports. And that is to be collected, by reminding who it is that hath so determined, he that can effect all his determinations, and do all his pleasure. The reason of his intendments, and performances, must be fetched from himself, and the perfection of his own nature; unto which nothing can be more agreeable. When death, let in by sin, hath been reigning, doing the part of a king, as Rom. v. 17. over so great a part of God's creation, it can be little suitable to him, who doth all things after the counsel of his will, (Eph. i. 11.) to let it reign for ever. Sometime it must be swallowed up in victory. Otherwise,—1. His own glory would suffer a perpetual eclipse,—2. The felicity of his redeemed should never be complete. Neither of which, as we are taught to apprehend the state of things, can consist with the absolute perfection of his being.

(1.) Can we think it agreeable to him, to suffer such a perpetual solecism or incongruity within his dominion, that when death, by means of a most criminal apostacy, had made so great an inroad into the nobler part of his creation, *i. e.* had broken in amongst creatures capable of immortality, (who indeed otherwise had not been capable of sin,) and thereby darkened the glory which shone more brightly in such an order of creatures; it should be so always? *i. e.* that such a sort of creatures should be perpetually continued, to be born, and sin, and die. Sometime we must think this course of things should have an end, and not by yielding an everlasting conquest to an enemy. We can well conceive it most worthy of God, when he had made such creatures, unto whom liberty was as agreeable as holiness and felicity, to leave them to themselves awhile, as probationers and candidates for that state of immortal life, whereof they were not incapable. It well became a self-sufficient Being, and an absolute Sovereign, to let them understand dependance, and subjection; and that their state was precarious, not his; to let them feel the cost of ungovernableness, and self-will, and the disagreeableness thereof to their condition who were not self-subsistent, and had not their good in their own hands; if, being put upon this trial, they would transgress, and open a way for death to come in upon them, the real loss could only be their own, and none of his. He had no reason therefore to prevent it, by so unseasonable an interposition, as should prevent the orderly connexion between duty and felicity; *i. e.* the precedency of the former to the other. All this was a most unexceptionable procedure. But then, when being left to themselves, they as men, or as Adam, had transgressed, (Hos. vi. 7.) and done like themselves, *i. e.* like frail, mutable creatures, in their lapse into sin and death; how opportune was it for him, now, to do more illustriously like himself, *i. e.* by so surprising, unthought of methods, as the Gospel reveals, to recover to himself this glory out of the cloud, and make it shine more brightly than ever, in this final victory over death, and him that had the power of it! So that it shall at last retain no dominion over any, but such as by their own choice, during a new state of trial, remained in an inviolable union with that prince of darkness and death. How glorious will the triumphs of this victory be over the grand apostate! And how unsupposable is it, that he should have occasion left him to glory in an eternal conquest! And,

(2.) It is not a light thing to him, whose nature is love, that without this final victory the felicity of the redeemed should never be fully accomplished. Antecedently to the Gospel revelation, it would seem more agreeable to the nature of God, that some should be rescued from the power of death, than that all should lie under it for ever. But we, to whom that revelation is vouchsafed, cannot now but think it the most unlikely thing in the world, that the design of Almighty love should finally be defeated; and that such as are in vital union with the Redeemer, should either be overcome at last by death, or remain in an eternal struggle with it. Whence nothing can be conceived, in this case, but that, as to them, death must be swallowed up in this glorious everlasting victory.

Whereupon how admirable a display will there herein be of sundry the most known attributes and excellencies of the Divine nature, as his wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, justice, and truth, in the whole conduct, and in this final issue of things! as might be distinctly shown of each, if we were not within limits. He at first dealt with them very suitably to their natures, at length he deals with them according to his own; that it may be the theme of eternal contemplation to themselves, and the whole intelligent world, how far his ways are above their ways, and his thoughts above their thoughts, Isa. lv. And that as, at first, he thought it not fit to hinder them from doing as too little became such creatures, nothing should at last hinder him from doing as became a God.

II. But come we now to the use. And,

1. Do we find this saying, in the sacred word of God, that death is to be swallowed up in victory? then we are not to doubt, but so it shall be. A plenary assent is to be given to it. But what sort of assent? Not that which arises from the sight of our eye. If that were to be our only informer, we see no such thing; but quite the contrary. That represents death to us as the only conqueror, it visibly swallows up all in victory, wheresoever it makes a seizure. Nothing stands before it! we behold it turning every where living men and women, like ourselves, into breathless lumps of earth! It irresistibly introduces itself, and life is fled, and gone! Such as conversed with us, walked to and fro amongst us, reasoned, discoursed with us, managed business, pursued designs, delighted themselves with us, and gave us delight, become death's captives before our eyes, are bound in its bands, and we cannot redeem them, nor save ourselves. Where then is this swallowing up of death in victory? which is itself so constantly victorious! Our reason may tell us it shall not be always and universally so, but it flutters, and hallucinates. 'Tis the divine word that must at last put the matter out of doubt; and our faith therein, which is the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we do not see. If faith be to assure our hearts in this matter, it must be as it relies upon his word, who can do this, and hath said he will. If we believe his power, that renders it possible to us; if his word, that makes it certain. Hath he said it? who then shall gainsay it? 'Tis one of the true and faithful sayings of God.

2. If this be a credible saying, 'tis certainly a very comfortable one. If we can but make that first step, and perceive this not to be a hard or incredible saying; it is very obvious to make a second, and acknowledge it to be a very consolatory saying; and that both in reference to—the past death of our friends and relatives, even such as were nearest, and most dear to us;—and in reference to our own most certainly future and expected death. In the one case, and the other, we are to look upon it as a comfortable saying, that this mighty raging enemy shall have all his power lost, and swallowed up, in so glorious a victory, one day.

(1.) It is surely a very comfortable saying, in the former of these cases, the case of our losing friends and relations very dear unto us. And there only needs this to make it most deliciously pleasant, that is, to have a comfortable persuasion concerning such, that they are part of Christ's seed, they are some of them, in reference to whom Christ is, in the most peculiar sense, the first-fruits, so as that they have a pre-assurance of victory in his conquest and victory over death and the grave. And we have great reason to be so persuaded concerning that worthy gentlewoman, whose late decease is the more special occasion of this solemn assembly at this time. She was one who (as such as had most opportunity to observe, and best ability to judge, did reckon) had given abundant evidence of the work of God's saving grace upon her own spirit, and who thereupon did long walk with God in a very continued course; so indeed, as that though her comforts were observed not to be rapturous, yet they were steady and even; so as that she was rarely troubled with doubts, to give obstruction or hinderance to her in her Christian course; if any such doubt did arise, it soon vanished, and she quickly, through the mercy of God, received satisfaction, and so went cheerfully on in her way. She was abundant in reading, especially of the Holy Book; that was her business and delight. She very little cared to concern herself in reading writings that were merely notional, or polemical and disputative; but the most practical one she was most of all taken with, such as treated of the other state, and of the duties of Christians in the mean time in reference thereto; future felicity, and present spiritual-mindedness, that has so certain connexion therewith, and so direct a tendency thereto, were, with her, the delightful subjects, which she chose to read of, and meditate upon.

Her temper was observed to be even, betwixt a freeness and reservedness. She was not melancholy, though much inclined to solitariness; and would frequently lament, that so much of her precious time was passed away, either in necessary business or civil conversation, that was not to be avoided. It was observed that her disposition was most highly charitable, very apt to give, even to her uttermost, as occasions did occur.

In reference to her children, her care was most tender. Much of her time was spent in instructing them, while under her instruction, and within her reach; teaching them their catechism, with the proofs at large, and how to apply the proofs to the answer, so as to bring them to a distinct understanding thereof. And in this way and course she passed through the world. Her last sickness did very little alter the temper of her spirit, it was calm and sedate all along. Only so much does deserve a remark, that she was prepossessed with an apprehension that she should die suddenly; so much of God's secret he was pleased to impart to her, as he sometimes does to more inward friends; that discovery he vouchsafed to her, as to a favourite, to let her have some kind of pre-signification, that her passage out of this world should be very quick, whensoever it came: and so it was, that sitting in her chair, amidst familiar discourse, in a demidiated sentence, she made a full stop, and life was ended, before that could have an end.

Now certainly the decease of such a one ought not to be lamented with that bitter sorrow, as if there were no such thing as this, that death were certainly to be swallowed up in victory, in an entire and complete victory, with reference to such a one. It seems indeed, in such cases, as was said to you before, unto the judgment of our sense, that death only overcomes, we see not beyond that; it turns a living creature into a dead clod, and so it is laid among earth, it is buried in the grave, our sight goes no further. But when we are persuaded, by the word of the Lord, that this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible, incorruption, and death be swallowed up in such a victory, as you have heard; certainly this takes away the cause of all bitter and reliefless sorrow.

I am not unapprehensive that reverend brother, whom this stroke touches more nearly, is much fitter to administer this consolation, than receive it from such a one as I. But as we may any of us put in for our share, as our case may require and can admit, in what is so generally spoken with reference to Christians dying in the Lord, and their surviving fellow-Christians, that as yet live in him, 1 Thess. iv. from verse 13. onward to the end; so, we are directed to comfort one another therewith. Be patient, I pray you, while I present to you this most suitable portion of Scripture. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." We shall be in a great promptitude and disposition of spirit to do so, if these words be looked upon as divine sayings, as the words of the living and immortal God. My friends, do you not find there is spirit in these words? Is there not strong consolation in them? How can we but think so, unless our whole religion be with us but a fable? This concerns us all upon the common Christian account, who are but a residue, a remnant, escaped, and exempted awhile from being part of the spoils and triumphs of death; which hath slaughtered, and thrown into the dust, probably a much greater number of our friends and relatives, than we ourselves do make, who are left behind. And 'tis likely we have been most of us divers times mourners, upon such occasions. This shows upon what account, and in what case, we may intermingle very reviving consolations with our sorrows, and that we ought freely, as the occasion recurs, to apply it to ourselves, and one another.

But I withal think there may be somewhat of more special import, tending to repress intemperate sorrow, on such an occasion, in that of Ezek. xxiv. 16. I think there may be somewhat, I say, collected, besides what was more peculiar and appropriate by way of signal to the prophet himself, that may reach the last mentioned case. It was a thing enjoined upon him, that he should not mourn nor weep, nor should his tears run down, when God should take away from him the desire of his eyes with a stroke. I reckon that, as we have seen, Christians should not mourn like other men; so the Lord's prophets are not to mourn altogether like others of his people, but somewhat more of restraint they are to put upon themselves, that they may discover a higher excellency, or somewhat a greater measure of that spirit of faith ruling in them, that gives a great allay to present things, whether good or evil, as it begets clearer and more vivid apprehensions of things yet future and out of sight. And that as all believers should endeavour, in things of common concernment to all, to be exemplary to one another, and to other men; so they who are so much nearer to God, in office and relation, should be examples to believers in conversation, spirit, faith, 1 Tim. iv. 12.

(2.) This should be very comfortable too unto them that are in union with Christ, in reference to their own future death, which they are continually to expect. Death is often saying to us repeatedly, and very sensibly, to our very bone and our flesh, You shall be my prey shortly; at least, sooner or later, It is ready to make its seizure upon us; when, we do not know; but we are sure some time it will.

But, my friends, it does not become Christians to look upon this thing, called death, as so formidable a thing, as it is commonly reckoned: it is ignominious to our pro-

fession, not to be endured amongst them that have life and immortality brought to light, and set in view before their eyes in the Gospel; such as profess to be united with Christ, who hath life in himself, and imparts it to all that are so united, such a life, hid with Christ in God; and hope that when he who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory. It becomes not such to die continually, by the fear of dying, or that the very thoughts of death should be deadly to them.

This is remote from what was much observed to be the temper and character of primitive Christians. A heathen prince,[d] who thoroughly understood them not, censures them too hardly, as being in the other extreme, (though he at length became kinder to them,) as if they rashly threw themselves upon death. Whereas he says, the soul should rationally and becomingly be in readiness to be loosed from the body, Λελογισμένως, καὶ σεμνῶς. But how come we to lose our character, and our glory? How degenerated a thing is the Christianity of our age! To die without regret, is counted an attainment; it should be with gladness, (Psal. xvi. 9—11.) and upon the considerations there mentioned, as being now upon the confines of that world of perfect purity, bliss, and joy; and having so great an assurance that the intermediate death, we are to go through, is no sooner suffered, than overcome!

We should deal closely with ourselves in this. Do we think this saying a fable, or a trifle? Have these words no meaning? We should labour to come to a point, and say, if we have no reason to disbelieve them, we will believe them absolutely; and live as having gained our point, and overcome already; *i. e.* who are as sure of victory, as of death. Some overcome by dying, as others are overcome by it. There are who are not hurt by the second death. If death strike once, it thereby puts it out of its own power ever to strike a second time, or hurt them more. Let us once bring our case to that state as to live in continual defiance of death, let it strike when it will. Dependence, only on the grace and Spirit of Christ, must give us this confidence; not an opinion that we are ourselves strong enough to act separately, but that knowing our relation to him, we are through him that loved us more than conquerors, or as that ὑπερνικῶμεν, Rom. viii. 37. may be understood to signify, we are a glorious triumphant sort of conquerors. We not only conquer, but triumph too, through him that loved us, being persuaded that neither death, nor life—shall separate us from his love—So a noted expositor understands that word, observing how great a delight this apostle takes, when he would heighten a matter, in the use of that particle ὑπὲρ.

It is elsewhere said, (Col. iii. 3.) Ye are dead, but your life, &c. We are dead, *i. e.* in ourselves, we are a sort of dead or dying creatures, death hath almost got the possession of us already, has partly seized, and partly sentenced us to die, and irreversibly. This the apostle intimates, where he adds what you have heard: Ye have a life hid with Christ in God, that life is safe, and out of the reach of death, no death can touch that life. They that are born of God, have in reference to this life (though the other must be given up) a self-preserving principle and power in them, 1 John v. 18. They keep themselves, that the evil one toucheth them not; that is, not mortally, or with any deadly touch. In having a new, holy, divine life; they have an assuring pledge also of the permanency, perpetuity, and everlastingness of it. If a man have once drank of that water which Christ gives, it shall be in him a perpetual fountain, a well of water springing up into everlasting life, John iv. 14.

Are we Christians, and with the springings of this life do we not feel a lively joy springing, and exulting in our hearts? Add vital Christianity to the rational nature, and lothness to die is a repugnancy, and a reproach to both. Christianity so plainly stating our case, reason should judge upon it; and suitable affections arise in us thereupon, as they would if our Christianity were vital, and the product of the Divine Spirit. Then, how should we bless God that we are mortal! and that it is not in the power of all this world to keep us from dying out of it, when we know in how glorious a victory that death will be swallowed up! But it may be said by some, "We should very little fear death, if we did know our interest in Christ, if we were not in great uncertainty, and had not our hearts hanging in doubt within us, about this thing. And therefore,

3. This saying should be monitory to us, (as it is credible, as it is comfortable, so it is a monitory saying also,) Death shall be swallowed up in victory. This said, in reference to some (which cannot be meant as to all) so great a thing, spoken with restriction, ought to make them of whom it is not meant look about them. With what solicitude should we concern ourselves, to be at a certainty! Am I one of them, in reference to whom death shall be swallowed up in such a victory? It should awaken us to consider, Have we made our interest sure in our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Prince and Lord of life? He that hath the Son hath life. It is eternal life that is spoken of in that context, 1 John v. 11, 12. This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son; that is, this eternal life. He that hath the Son, hath this life; he that hath not the Son, hath not this life. Spiritual life and eternal life are all one, all of a piece, the same in nature and kind; the one will grow up into the other.

That life only is here meant, that will be eternal life. To the same sense is that, He that believeth in me, shall never die, John xi. 26. These are plain words. He hath a life in him that is immortal, sacred, and not liable to be touched. It was before said, They that believe in him, if dead, shall live, ver. 25. But not only that, but 'tis further added, They that believe in him shall never die.[e] If dead, they shall live; if they live, they shall never die. What means this? That they have a life, besides this bodily one; which is continued through death. Of this line or thread, death makes no intercision. But we can never justify it to God, or our own understandings, to rest in a dubious uncertainty about a matter of so vast consequence as this. Unconcernedness here is the most unaccountable thing in the whole world; *i. e.* whether we have only that life in us which will end in the darkness and rottenness of a grave, and a horrid hell; or that which runs into eternal life? Things will come to this issue very shortly with us, that either death must, as to us, be swallowed up in victory, or we be swallowed up of victorious death; nor have we any ways to ascertain our own state, but, as was said, by uniting with the Prince of life; *i. e.* by receiving him in all the capacities wherein we are to be concerned with him; and by resigning ourselves entirely to him. For if we must have him that we may have life, how can we otherwise have him but by receiving him? The Gospel, under which we live, can only be a savour of life to us as it disposes us hereunto. Recollect yourselves then, how do your Lord's days, and other seasons of attending this Gospel, pass over with you? Have you long expected life, and (which is less likely) do you meet with continual and total disappointments? And doth it cause with you no qualmish thoughts? But 'tis infinitely a sadder case, if you never feel yourselves begin to live, and yet are never disappointed; because you never attend upon the gospel-dispensation with any such design or hope. Is the matter thus, that if you speak the truth of your case, you must say, "I have a soul dead to all the actions, motions, sensations, enjoyments, of a divine and spiritual life." And shall it be always thus, by our own consent, with any of us? We have however the rational, intellectual life, and can think; do we think 'tis fit for us to rest satisfied and secure in such a state? What, satisfied in the midst of death? such a death? while we are capable of apprehending at once the horror, the danger, and the remediableness of our case? What will this come to? It can only be holy, divine life that must be victorious over death, as the warring, opposite principle: if there be nothing to oppose it, what shall conquer? Death is in that case total, and upon such terms, till life begin to spring in thy soul, thou must reckon it likely to be eternal. Yet let none so mistake as to imagine this life an enthusiastical thing, that must discover itself in rapturous ecstatical motions, or go for nothing. It perfects our faculties, therefore destroys them not; and chiefly consists in a rational judgment, choice, and love of what is most worthy of us; what is fittest to be done by us, and what is with fullest satisfac-

d Marc. Antonin. de Vit. Sua, lib. 11.

e Vid. Hamm. in loc.

tion to be enjoyed; with a steadfast, most resolved adherence thereunto.

4. This saying ought to be instructive to us, in reference especially to this one thing, *i. e.* that we abstain from rash censures of providence, that God lets death be *regnant* in so great a part of his creation, so long a time. It shall be swallowed up in victory; let that solve with us the phenomenon. It seems indeed an untoward one, and might, at first be an amazing spectacle, even to the blessed angels themselves, to behold so great a revolt in heaven; and afterwards to take notice of an intelligent world, of creatures beneath them, successively, through one first delinquent, drawn in as accomplices, into a like defection; and death hereby spreading its horrid shadow, and extending its power, over so great and so noble a part of the universe! committing such wastes, making such desolations, from age to age, in so great a part of the creation of God! But there are many alleviating considerations, that should compose our spirits to a rational quietude, and be satisfying and pacifying to our minds with reference to this thing. Let me but name some few to you, which I shall leave with you for this purpose.

(1.) Do but consider how minute a part of the creation of God this globe, this point, this punctilio rather, of our earth is, where death has reigned, and so long had place.

(2.) Consider how much of life there is in and about this little world of ours. When upon one single mole-hill you see the brisk motions and efforts of so many hundred lives, you have reason to apprehend there is a great deal of vitality about this little spot of earth.

(3.) Consider and collect how probable it is, that as we go higher and higher, the nobler and finer parts of God's creation must be much more replenished with a nobler and more excellent sort of life. It is very unreasonable to think, that this clod of earth should be so full of life; and that in higher and purer regions there should not be a richer plenitude of life, or of such inhabitants as live nobler and more excellent lives than we. And,

(4.) For ought we know, death never reaches higher than this earth of ours, and what is in a nearer vicinity to it. And that, therefore, there be vast and ample regions, incomparably beyond the range of our eye, or thought, where now no death ever comes; after the detrusion of the first revolters, from those bright regions. When we are told, Eph. iv. 10. our Lord Jesus Christ is ascended far above all heavens, as it were a fond attempt to pretend to count them, so it were rash philosophizing, to go about to describe them. But can we suppose them spacious, wild wastes? or not suppose them replenished with numberless numbers of excellent creatures that, in their confirmed state, fear no death; and continually pay a willing, joyful homage to their great Preserver? For every knee must bow to him, of things in heaven, Phil. ii. 10. And when we are told, Eph. i. 20, 21. God hath set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name, &c. And 1 Pet. iii. 22. That he is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him. Though we cannot form distinct thoughts what those dynasties, principalities, and dominions are; yet we cannot but suppose those unconceivably vast and ample regions fully peopled with immortal inhabitants, that reign in life, in a more excellent sense. For it being said our Lord ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, (Eph. iv. 10.) this must suppose suitable recipients. And if his influences reach down in such plenty to our minute earth, (as ver. 11, 12, 13.) how copious are they here!

(5.) Consider that here, where death has made its inroad, though the apostate spirits surround us, and encompass this earth of ours, and go to and fro throwing death among us every where; yet even here is a glorious offspring continually arising, the Redeemer's seed, in whom a divine life is gradually springing up from age to age. So that, at length, they make a great multitude, which no man can number, standing before the throne, clothed with white robes, and, as ensigns of victory, having palms in their hands, Rev. vii. 9. Here is life then disseminated through all this death, that inwraps our world, which, for ought we know, is the centre of death; it may be here, for ought we can tell, and no where else, (here, or hereabouts,) and yet even here, a holy divine life is insinuating and spreading itself, even among us, over whom death has reigned; and there are great numbers, that having received abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 17. Here is supposed a kingdom, with a counter-kingdom, and one head against another; one that brought in death and condemnation upon the world, but another that brings in righteousness and life. And that here, even in this lower region, the Redeemer should have so large a portion, (we know not how large,) this very much narrows the confines of death. And let it be further considered,

(6.) That where death shall be perpetual, it is there but self-procured. They only lie under death, that loved it. All they that hate me, love death, Prov. viii. 36. They inwrap themselves in death, they make a covenant with it. That sin, which is death, which carries death and hell in itself, that they loved: 'twas so, 'tis true, with the rest, that finally perish not; but it was not always so. The grace of God made a difference, not to be quarrelled at, when striving with many, it is victorious with some. But of those with whom it is not so, it must be said, as their final, never-altered sense, even to the last, they would not be plucked out of the gulf, that deadly gulf, where they therefore lie, as in their most agreeable element. And let it further be considered,

(7.) That for the death that shall be perpetual, 'tis to be confined, and go no further. Before, it was diffused, and continually more and more diffusing itself. But in the future state of things, when time has run to its period, and the affairs of it are shut up by the final judgment, death and hell are now to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death, Rev. xx. 14. All death is now to be gathered into death, hell into hell. It shall be contracted, gathered into itself. It's true, it will be therefore consummate, finished, perfect in its kind, or full of itself, as that which is without mixture cannot but be, (as was noted before,) here will be pure death, without mixture, and which therefore will have no allay. But then, whereas formerly it ranged to and fro uncontrolled, now it is confined to its own narrower circle, and can have no new subject; and shall therefore give no further trouble or disturbance to the rest of God's creation. Moreover, consider,

Lastly, That this victory will not be gradual only, but total and entire. Every thing of mortality, that was hanging about these glorious victors, shall be swallowed up in perfect and in endless life. Death is unstung first, disarmed, and then easily overcome. Its sting is said to be sin, the deadliest thing in death. A plain further proof, by the way, the apostle intended death also in the moral sense. And the insulting inquiry, "Where is it?" implies 'tis not any where to be found, and signifies a total abolition of it; and, by consequence, must infer that every thing of death besides must, as to them, for ever cease and be no more. Which also the phrase of swallowing up doth with great emphasis express. And this completes the vindication of Providence, *i. e.* in this whole affair; and not only vindicates but magnifies the conduct of the Supreme Disposer of all things. For by this means, as his wisdom, power, and goodness are most highly illustrated; so the trial of his people's faith (the great instrument of this their victory, as well as of that over the world, 1 John v. 4.) is found unto praise, honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 7. And they find, what, by patient continuance in well-doing, they were enjoined to seek, which shows they were not vainly put upon so noble a pursuit, honour, glory, immortality, to their actual attainment of eternal life, Rom. ii. 7.

Now therefore shall this saying be made good, in its fullest sense; and if there shall be such a victory, so glorious a one, won at last, surely we should be tuning our instruments, and labouring to get our hearts into a frame to sing the ἐπινίκιον, the triumphant song, ver. 55, 56. and conclude it, as ver. 57. Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LETTERS.

TO A FRIEND ON THE LOSS OF AN EXCELLENT WIFE.

I SERIOUSLY lament your new affliction, whereof I lately had the surprising account. And I should be the more concerned for it, if I did not consider it hath befallen one, who can with judgment estimate and suffer it. He hath enough to relieve him against the ungrateful events which our present state is liable to, who is serious in the belief of God's universal government over this world, and that there is another. The former of these is a principle much abused by some; which no more proves it false than the Gospel, out of which some have the mischievous skill to extract a deadly savour. It is our great privilege, for which we ought to be thankful, that by such arguments whereby we can most certainly demonstrate to ourselves, that there is a God, we can as certainly prove that he is not an Epicurean God; unto which imaginary idol only that could belong, to be disturbed by being concerned about human affairs. But if he knew the true nature of God better, who came forth from him into our world, on purpose to make him known, we are sufficiently assured, not a hair can fall from our head without him, much less so considerable a part of ourselves.

This is not the state wherein things are to be unexceptionably well. But we have cause, as things are, to acknowledge and adore the wisdom and goodness of Providence, that the wickedness of the world hath not in so many thousand years quite confounded families and all human society long ago: but that as wise counsel did first settle the institution of those lesser societies, God hath from age to age renewed the impression of that part among others of the law of nature, by which men are prompted as by instinct to preserve them; besides the positive precept he hath given, setting out to each relative the duty whereby order is to be preserved in them. And when we know his government extends so low, how gladly ought we to submit ourselves to it, and allow him to determine how long we should enjoy such relatives, as well as that there should be any such. For we know that they were appointed but for this temporary estate, not for that wherein we are to be as the angels of God in heaven, where each one hath a subordinate self-sufficiency, and needs not the meet helps which the exigency of this state makes so useful. And therefore the reason as well as the authority of such precepts, is most entirely to be subscribed to, that because the time is short, they that have wives be as though they had none; they that rejoice (in having them) as if they rejoiced not; they that weep (in losing them) as though they wept not. So our affections will correspond to the objects, which are of the same make: for the fashion of the world passeth away. And it were a gloomy thought to consider all as passing and vanishing, if we did not seriously believe, that it vanishes to make way for another, that shall never vanish, and that shall shortly enter in its perfect glory, and fill up the whole stage. Scaffolds are taken down, when the eternal building is finished.

TO A GENTLEWOMAN, ON THE LOSS OF A BELOVED DAUGHTER.

DEAR AND HONOURED MADAM,

DID you think two or three months ago, such a trial was so near? Such sad futurities God, in mercy to us, hides from us, that we may not afflict ourselves before he afflicts us; and that when he intends we should suffer that particular affliction but once, namely, when it comes, we may not impose so hardly upon ourselves, as to suffer it a thousand times over before it comes. Sufficient is the day, &c. If he should have made us all prophets, in reference to all the events of our time, we should bring all the evils of every future day into every former day; as if the evil of the day were not enough for the day.

But though he gives us not certain predictions of such evils, lest he should torment us, he gives forewarnings, lest he should surprise us. He hath told us we must all once die, and not when; that life is a vapour; that all flesh is grass; that the beauty or glory of it is but as the flower of grass; withering things! He hath asserted his own dominion over lives, and over the spirits of all flesh, as the God of them, to lodge and dislodge them, where and as he pleases. And who are we, that we should grudge him that dominion; or so much as wish we could have wrested that part of his empire out of his hands? But when he afflicts, it is good to consider what it is for. It comes not out of the dust, though it may reduce us or ours thither. And if our utmost search cannot find out a particular cause, (wherein we should take heed of being too indulgent and partial to ourselves, but should beg that what we know not he would teach us,) yet we should however more earnestly endeavour to improve the affliction to the general end, which we may be sure he aims at; to withdraw our minds from this present world, and state of things; to take heed of being peremptory in laying any designs that must be measured by time, and be subject to the uncertainties of it; to determine nothing but with that reserve, If God will, we shall do this or that, (James iv. 15.) to have our minds ingulphed and swallowed up, not of the stream of time, but of the ocean of eternity; to be easily taken off from any purpose, the scene whereof must be laid on this earth or lower world; to have our hearts more entirely and more strongly set upon God, so as to be able to say, Whom have I in heaven or earth besides thee? that the true end may be gain, though such a comfort be lost, and the particular offending cause cannot be found.

We may err, in thinking some such particular offence must be fastened upon. If it clearly can, it ought; if not, it is better forbear judging than misjudge. Possibly chastening for a particular sin may not be in God's design: it is not always. We may be sure it never is his principal design in taking away one relative from another. He made all things (principally) for himself; he made us but secondarily for one another. If his principal design in making such a creature was not to please me, his principal design in taking it away was not to displease or afflict me. He hath his own greater and higher end concerning his own creature, to glorify himself upon it, and by it, in a greater world than this. Many afflictions are for trial; and that in such a case is an awful thought.

The jealous God hath me now under trial, how I can bear, how I can submit, how I can reverence his hand, how I can behave myself towards him when he afflicts; whether I will venture to contend with him, or be sullen and morose towards him; because he hath bereaved me of a child I delighted in, whether I better loved him or my child. The trial may be manifold; of my faith, of my patience, of my fear of him, of my love to him: and I may add, it may be intended for a trial of gratitude, and a

mighty trial that is. We are required, in every thing to give thanks. And Job did it, and said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," when with all his substance he took away all his children at once: The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken. The injunction, "In every thing give thanks," signifies there is in every thing some matter of praise. I know not so immediately what was in this case; but if there was what I have heard, great indications of early piety, if there were grounds to hope there was a work of regeneration wrought, there is infinitely more matter of thanksgiving than complaint. What had the life of a child been worth without this? when better never to have been born! It is a far greater thing if he have taken her as his own child, than if he had left her to you, only as yours. If you have faith to look into the unseen world, and behold her taken into the society of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, how much more hath God done for her and you, than if he had left her to your care and provision in this wretched world? We are told there is joy in heaven for the conversion of a sinner: much more for the glorification of a convert! That joy ought to swallow up in very great part your sorrow. The good Lord frame your spirit suitably to these things, in whom I am,

Your truly respectful servant, (very sensible of your case,)

Love Lane, Aldermanbury,
London, Sept. 29, 1691.

J. HOWE.

THE TWO FOLLOWING ARE TO A NEW MARRIED COUPLE,

(Who were persons of distinction,) that were written on the same sheet of paper, that was directed to the Lady with whom Mr. Howe had been long acquainted.

MOST HONOURED SIR,

I THANKFULLY acknowledge the favour of your welcome lines, which ought to be most entirely so, both upon the account of the author, and the matter of them. For though my opportunity for so desirable an acquaintance hath been but little as to the circumstance, it hath been much as to the substance of what I know of you, in ways that gave me greatest assurance, before I had the happiness of oral converse with you. Nor could any thing be more grateful to me, than to read you from your own hand so related, and so well pleased (as I doubt not you will be daily more and more) with your relation, and the other accessory correlates, with whom God hath cast your lot.

I believe you have much reason to bless God, (who orders all things to the best advantage to such as sincerely give themselves up to his conduct,) that he led you not into such a condition and state of life as he now at length hath brought you into, before you were well acquainted with the rules and duties of it, better than to need help from such a one as I. But among the many other precepts that concern that case, I dare adventure to recommend those of 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. and pursuantly thereto, to offer to your thoughts, that this can be but a partial temporary felicity, and so far only so at all, as it is enjoyed only as mediate, and subservient to the full and final felicity which we are professedly seeking and waiting for: so far ought it to be, to oppose it, or let it be an obstruction thereto. Which is the nature of all good things that have only the goodness of the means, and not of the end, that their goodness is variable, and by misapplication may degenerate into a hurtful evil. Within the compass of such things is the truth of those words to be confined; *Nil prodest, quod non lædere possit idem.* It is beyond the measure of any created good to be universally so. That therefore which in its own place is a real good, applied to the particular purpose which it is capable of serving, out of that place, and being trusted, valued, and delighted in beyond the measure which God and the nature of the thing have stated and set, may become a hurt to us.

But there can be no greater or more endearing obligation to use any mercy for God, than an habitual fixed sense of its having been received from him, and a deeply radicated and often repeated agnition of his sovereign hand in ordering it to be our lot, with all the circumstances that have had any reference thereto. For what ingenuous heart can endure to oppose to him, or employ against him, the (apprehended) fruit of his own favour and kindness? a pledge of his paternal love and care so understood! And therefore the greater the gift is (still considered under that strict notion) the stronger is the inducement to honour and serve the giver with it, and to enjoy according to prescription, what we enjoy not but by his vouchsafement.

If to all this I should add a request to you to be exceeding kind to my most dear and honoured friend, it were the greatest impertinence in all the world. For she having such a temper to work upon, will make you so whether you will or no: and I might as well use arguments to persuade a fragrant flower to send forth its grateful odours, when a most benign orient sun is plying it with its cherishing morning beams. Such may you long be, both of you mutually (sun and flower) to each other, shining and flourishing with all the influence, and under the continual blessing, of Heaven. So shall you communicate a part of that joy, which I most sincerely wish you, to

SIR,

Your very faithful and affectionate humble servant,

J. HOWE.

WHATSOEVER leisure (most dear and honoured Madam) you may suppose me to have, I had little reason to suppose —— and yourself to have much, from the reading of one another, to cast your eyes upon any thing I could write. But if after this paper shall have lain one quarter of a year somewhere near your dressing-box, you find it not unseasonable to bestow a glance upon it, you will then at length find your disappointment. For it will tell you nothing but what you well knew, or might easily guess before; that having a constant most affectionate respect and honour for you, I cannot but be highly pleased, that you are so.

And methinks it should not much surprise you, if I further say, I would have you somewhat to alter (or make your exception to) your own rule, and not show the less kindness to ——— for that he is a married man. This will not be strange to you, if you remember some of your last winter lines.

After this hath made you smile a little, as that of yours did me, then think that this novelty in your condition will neither make nor allow you to smile always, though I hope it will add a great deal to the comfort and pleasantness of your days.——And you may sometime have occasion to think seriously together, of the sense of those words, Luke xiv. 26. And always remember the subordination that all creature-love must be in, to that of the supreme object of our love. How pleasant a thing will it be to have hearts united and consenting in the resolution of loving him perpetually above all, to whom we owe our all, and who is altogether lovely! to consult and conspire together, how most to promote his interest, and improve in acquaintance with him, and conformity to him. This I believe your heart to be much formed to before-hand. The great care must be, that such resolutions do not gradually languish. We find many are apt by unobserved degrees to starve the good affections and inclinations which they would abhor to assassinate by a sudden violence. I write securely, that such an intimation will by so great a kindness as yours, be very well taken, from

Your Ladyship's

Most affectionate humble servant,

J. HOWE.

THE FOLLOWING WAS WRITTEN UPON OCCASION OF THE DECEASE OF BOTH THE PARENTS OF THE LADY AFORESAID, WITHIN ABOUT EIGHT MONTHS OF EACH OTHER.

MOST HONOURED DEAR MADAM,

WHEN I heard of your former great loss, I was confined by distemper to my bed: and I received information of the other, when I was going a great journey to accompany my wife and daughter to the Bath, from whence they are not returned as yet, and I came home from my journeyings

but last week. I have not in the mean time forgot your Ladyship's affliction, nor been without the apprehension how tender a sense your loss of two such parents must be accompanied with. Nor should I now mention it, did I not apprehend it may yet be reflected on to better purpose, than only to renew your sorrow. And that it may, I pray you, let it be remembered in the first place, with serious gratitude, (for we are required in every thing to give thanks,) that God continued to you the comfort of such relations so long, and for the many mercies he made them instrumental of to you, in your tender years; that he vouchsafed to you the blessing of so excellent an education by their means; that you were thereby brought to know him and his Christ; that by their care you were so comfortably settled in the world, and in a station wherein he hath given you the opportunity of being so serviceable in building up a family for him, and of contributing to the planting and propagating religion in it; and that you see so much of a blessing from heaven upon the plantation. Your part is that of a mother, and you have had a great example before your eyes. That may still live (and I doubt not will) in your mind and heart, while the person that gave it still lives in a higher region, whither, following such steps, you also will be translated in the fittest season.

I pray for the welfare, in all valuable respects, of your Ladyship, and all yours; being, in great sincerity, your Ladyship's

Most respectful, and most faithful, humble servant,

Love Lane, Aldermanbury,
London, Sept. 5, 1695.

J. HOWE.

THE FOLLOWING WAS TO THE SAME ON THE DEATH OF A MOST PROMISING SON.

MOST WORTHY AND HONOURED SIR, WITH
MY DEAREST AND MOST HONOURED LADY,

IT would be incomparably more grievous to me at this time to write to you, if I were under a necessity of writing nothing but were mournful and sad. The same thing, if we turn it round, will be found to have a double aspect. That dispensation that represents you deprived of an earthly son, speaks you the parents of a glorified child, more highly dignified than it was possible he could have been on earth. This post brings you greater news than if it had informed you, your son is created emperor of Germany, or king of France or Spain. Let us speak and think of things as we believe, and profess to believe. Indeed if our apprehensions of their state in the unseen world, who were true lovers of God, have nothing of solace and pleasure in them, it is mere useless empty profession they are all to be resolved into, and not faith.

My heart bleeds for you, and with you both, but it can do you no good to tell you so. I believe your lovely son unfeignedly loved God; and then read the rest, 1 Cor. ii. 9. James i. 10, 12. Of how great use might he have been in this world! But are those glorious creatures above, to whom he is now joined, inactive or unemployed? And are not their employments more noble and sublime, according to the more enlarged capacity of their faculties, and the higher dignity of their state? He was born to very considerable things as your heir; but he was begotten again to a more glorious inheritance, and the lively hope of it, 1 Peter i. 3. They that were about him, before it was possible for me to see him, told me he was insensible, as he was before I heard of his illness; but at my coming to him, he knew me at first sight, and seemed to have the use of his understanding for nothing but religion. He then spake not one misplaced word; said, he doubted not God was his Father, and that his present affliction was from the hand of that Father, not of an enemy. He desired me to pray with him, and seemed understandingly and affectionately to concur. This was on the Lord's day, and the next was the day of his glorious translation, near noon, before I could reach him a second time.

MR. C— came to me presently after, to advise with me about disposal of the body; who could give no advice but in the general, to have it prepared for interment in a way that might be decent, and not profusely expensive; not doubting but that there might be more particular direction from yourself, before actual interment, sent to Mr. C—, &c. who is willing to take the care upon him of seeing instructions fulfilled.

The Lord support you both, and abundantly bless the rest of yours.

I am, most honoured Sir and Madam, your most affectionately sympathizing servant in Christ our Lord,

St. John's Street,
London, Jan. 14, 1699.

JOHN HOWE.

THE TWO FOLLOWING WERE WRITTEN BY MR. HOWE, TO HIS DEAR AND INTIMATE FRIEND, MR. SPILSBURY.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

How hard a matter is it to keep up converse at this rate! when all that is pleasant and gainful in it lies on one side only. I read thy lines with fruit and delight; but have nothing to return of any value. And if a conscience is to be exercised in this sort of traffic, or indeed but a tolerable ingenuity, it cannot but occasion some regret, to barter away things of no worth for good commodities. If I tell thee I live, what doth that signify? when life itself is so little worth, how despicable is the notice of it! If I tell thee I love thee, thou knowest it before as to the *quod sit*; but for the *quid sit*, no words can express it; therefore the offer at it is vain. When, when shall we meet above! That will make us pure good company, when dulness and sluggishness are shaken off and gone, and we shall be all spirit and life! yet we shall be doing our Lord some service here, or that he will accept as such, if we be sincere. Thou wilt be visited by a worthy person ere long, that is gone first to Kidderminster, and means after he hath seen the son, to come to the father.

Cordial salutations from me and mine, to thee and thine. Farewell in our dear Lord: and still remember,

Thy entirely affectionate,

St. John Street,
Jan. 25, 1699.

J. HOWE.

MAY I once more hope to salute my dear brother in this world! whether I shall or not, I must leave to him to whom greater; and all things must be left. Thou mayest have taken thy flight before this reach thee, but the soul and spirit from whence it comes may in due time, through the infinite riches of freest grace, and the atoning blood of that sacrifice which once for all was offered up. We come to the general assembly, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, but as we come to Jesus the Mediator of the new testament, and to the blood of sprinkling. By his own blood he is entered into the holy of holies, as the forerunner, and for us. Upon such terms may sinful unprofitable servants hope to enter, and be received under the notion of faithful, and as those that are graciously counted such, into the joy of their Lord. Thou art ready to enter, and wilt shortly be adoring before the throne: Oh with what complacency! receiving the end of thy faith, having fought the good fight of it! And must thy poor brethren left behind, sigh and groan still? amidst their drowsy hearers, and too drowsy fruitless labours? But I envy thee not; and those that are dearest and nearest to thee, owe thee so much as to rejoice in thy joy, while they cannot as yet in their own, John xiv. 28. Thou art upon my heart, if God saw it good, to live and die with thee. This day se'nnight thy worthy brother B. and my brother F. dined with me, when thou wast most affectionately remembered; but art no day forgotten, by thy sincere lover, and of all thine, hoping and aiming (though faintly) to be thy follower,

J. HOWE.

If there be joy in heaven for a converted sinner, shall there not for a glorified saint! and the leader and teacher of many such! some that are in glory, and others that shortly shall be! O the triumph at thy abundant entrance!

Worthy Mr. Spilsbury, to whom this letter was written, died the 10th of July following.

FRAGMENT OF A SERMON.

THE fragment out of Mr. Howe's notes, about a particular faith in prayer, contains only brief hints, which he enlarged on in discourse: but I thought it worth preserving; and I believe there will be several of my mind. It is very concise; and the writing being a mixture of long-hand and short-hand, and the ink in some places almost worn out, it is a very difficult thing to read it; but having got what assistance I could in order to the right reading it, I shall here subjoin it. DR. CALAMY.

James v. 15. *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and the Lord shall raise him up.*

It is to be inquired how this is to be understood and applied.

1. How to be understood. Where in the general we must know, it is not to be looked upon as a universal maxim, admitting of no restriction or limitation; for then prayer might make a man immortal, if in every case wherein life were in hazard, any could be procured to employ their faith in prayer on his behalf. Unless we should say, that wherever the desired effect follows not, the faith was wanting, which ought to have been exercised in the case. To say that every prayer that has faith in it shall save the sick, is false; but that every prayer that has this special faith in it shall save the sick, is true.

That therefore we may speak the more distinctly, we must understand,

1. That there was somewhat in this matter extraordinary, and appropriate to that time.

2. Somewhat ordinary, and common to all times. We are to distinguish the one and the other.

1. There was somewhat extraordinary in this matter, and appropriate to that time; and that both as to the faith to be exercised, and the effect thereupon.

1. As to the faith to be exercised. The prayer of faith shall save the sick: that is, in those days, when the state of things did to the Divine wisdom make it necessary, that frequent miracles should be wrought for the confirmation of Christianity, faith was necessary to be exerted in prayer, that should, according to the tenor of the promise made in reference to those times, engage Omnipotency, in reference to the thing prayed for: the promise then was, Whatsoever ye pray, believing, ye shall receive; or it shall be done.

2. As to the effect,—that also was supernatural.

Quest. But it may be said, What! universally? What work might the disciples have made in that case?

Answ. The Divine power did go forth two ways.

1. In working the faith to be exercised: and,

2. In effecting the thing. So that the matter was always in God's own hand. The Spirit of God could be the author of no vain or imprudent faith, or consequent of it.

This faith of miracles was such a fiducial recumbence on the Divine power, in reference to this or that particular work, as whereby that was by his rule engaged to go forth, in saving the sick. This and common faith differ, in respect of the end, and the nature of the influence:—not holy, but physical.

2. There was here also somewhat that was ordinary. The instance of Elias is mentioned, who, ver. 17, 18. it is said, Was a man subject to like passions as we are, and yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought her fruit. There is somewhat from that extraordinary case to be learnt for common use, namely, that what the promise says to us now, we ought as confidently to believe, as they then, what is said to them.

Therefore take some propositions, concerning the nature and operation of the faith to be exercised in such a case, and the way wherein prayer ought to be managed and guided, so as that it may be expected to have influence in reference thereto.

1. Prayer is a great and indispensable duty. (There is here some reference in the manuscript; but after the utmost search, I know not what to make of it.)

2. That therefore we must conclude, whatsoever tends to render it an impertinence, must either be false, or misapplied. For it is most plainly a great part of our duty; and it could not consist either with the wisdom or truth of God, to have us enjoined such a duty, and have put energy incessant into the nature of it in vain. We must therefore resolve what is doubtful by what is plain. It is more plain that prayer is a duty, and more known, than what changes the nature of God can admit.

3. The argument from God's unchangeableness, would conclude as well against the usefulness of any other duty, that never so directly concerns our salvation.

4. Prayer is to be considered, not only as a means to obtain from God what we would have, but as a becoming homage of an intelligent creature.

5. Whatsoever unchangeableness we can suppose in the nature of God, (here there is something added in the manuscript which I can make nothing of; and then it follows) and it is unreasonable he should lose his right, by his perfection.

6. Yet also it is to be considered as a means to obtain good things, Job xxi. 15. (by which, I suppose, it was intended to be intimated, that it would be very wicked language in any, to offer to say with those whom Job speaks of in the text cited; What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?)

7. We are not to think prayer, though never so qualified, hath any proper efficacy, to move God this way or that: not so much as instrumental.

8. It is only a condition, upon which it seems good to God to put forth his power.

9. It is a condition that hath not always equally certain connexion with the thing we pray for, or other than the promise hath made.

10. The promises of God are or must be understood, proportionally to the nature of the things promised: which may be either of such a nature, as, &c. (Here the sense is incomplete. I suppose that which may be meant is, that the things which God has promised, may either admit or exclude a change. And then it is added "make men immortal." That is, I suppose, as to this present life.) And then the manuscript goes on, Things of a variable goodness cannot be the matter of a universal absolute promise. Miracles, &c.

11. Prayer may yet be the prayer of faith that God will do what is best. We should not make light of this more valuable object of faith. Suppose two children, which is the most privileged. (This I apprehend refers to the case of Esau and Jacob, so often taken notice of in Scripture.)

12. If God will do the thing, prayer in reference to it is not vain. For perhaps he hath wisely and rightly determined, that he will not do it but upon trust of his being acknowledged. This is a great piece of his sovereignty: his dominion and power over lives. I kill, and make alive, as though he had said, God of every life: universal cause.

13. It is very absurd to think, it were vain to pray, unless we were certain it contradicts the nature of prayer. For that supposes the thing in the power of them to whom we pray, and implies a referring it to their pleasure.

14. It must be submitted to him to judge what is most honourable for himself. It argues base thoughts of the invisible world, to think, &c. (that is, I suppose, to think we should be able to keep people from thence at our pleasure.)

15. What if he had said, Pray not. (I take this to be designed for an intimation, that had intercourse between an all-sufficient God and us, by prayer, been prohibited, we should have been left in a very helpless and hopeless, miserable and destitute, condition.)

A SERMON,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE JUSTLY LAMENTED DEATH OF THE TRULY REVEREND

MR. JOHN HOWE,

DECEASED APRIL THE 2ND.

PREACHED TO HIS CONGREGATION, APRIL 8, 1705. AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

BY JOHN SPADEMAN, MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

WE ARE YOUR REJOICING, EVEN AS YOU ALSO ARE OURS IN THE DAY OF THE LORD JESUS. 2 COR. I. 14.

TO MY SINCERELY HONOURED FRIENDS,

MRS. MARGARET HOWE, DR. GEORGE HOWE, MR. JOHN HOWE, MRS. PHILIPPE COLLET, MR. JAMES HOWE, WITH OTHER NEAR RELATIVES OF THE DECEASED.

MY WORTHY FRIENDS,

IF either the desire of him, whom the all-wise Disposer hath translated, or yours, (differing in this single matter from his,) had invited me to preach a funeral sermon for your excellent relative, I should have found a real unwillingness to such a service; and have judged it more eligible to have been wholly silent, than have spoken so few things as are mentioned in this practical discourse concerning him. He, indeed, received from the Father of lights so great a variety of both natural and Christian perfections, that he was not only a shining light, and ornament of his age, but an inviting example of universal goodness. The exercises whereof, towards men, did strongly recommend him to the esteem of those from whom his judgment in some things disagreed. So that (though he was most remote from seeking honour on this earth) he had that principal recompense of piety, in this life, a good name; which must preserve him from oblivion, though all his near relatives and acquaintance should studiously conceal his just praises. Nor can he want a monument to make him live in following ages, whose excellent writings have gained the approving suffrage of those who are capable judges; and they will be valued, while a relish of good sense and genuine piety is found among men.

All this speaks your loss, and of his church, yea, and of the nation, to be the greater; and I persuade myself, very few of his order have been so generally lamented; which is a tribute due to his real worth. But the obedience and resignation of your faith, have been the more grateful to him who hath called you to make such an offering, and whose mighty hand alone is able to bind up this wound, and both sustain and guide you in your progress to the same happiness which he now possesseth: if this plain discourse may contribute unto this blessed design, this will induce you to excuse the publishing of it, and the defects which are very obvious in

Your affectionate faithful Servant,
In our common Lord,
J. SPADEMAN.

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2 TIMOTHY III. 14.

BUT CONTINUE THOU IN THE THINGS WHICH THOU HAST LEARNED AND HAST BEEN ASSURED OF, KNOWING OF WHOM THOU HAST LEARNED THEM.

'TIS reasonably supposed that the mantle which fell from the prophet Elijah, as he was taken up into heaven, was highly valued and carefully preserved by his disciple Elisha; especially when he experienced a miraculous virtue annexed to it: the waters of Jordan, being divided when this garment was applied to 'em; as we read 2 Kings ii. 14. Indeed, when your late most worthy pastor (who may justly be styled an Elijah of this age) was translated by death, he left no garment which has any virtue to recommend it; but (which is far more important) before his translation, he let fall such holy instructions and heavenly counsels, as, through divine assistance, are able to dry up the waters of excessive grief, and open a passage into the celestial Canaan, into which himself hath entered. It is not necessary, nor is it my design, to open fresh springs of sorrow for so very grievous a breach as the hand of God hath made, by representing the exceeding loss which his family and relatives, this society, yea, the whole city and nation, have sustained. There is the justest reason, with heart-affecting sorrow, to repeat Elisha's words, used on the occasion now mentioned, (2 Kings ii. 12.) My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, (England,) and the horsemen thereof. The death of one Elijah, who had the spirit of prayer, whereby to open heaven, and bring down refreshing showers of blessings on a whole people; the death, I say, of one such, must be a public and common loss never enough to be deplored.

The attiring of this place, and of many assembled in it, speaks it to be a house of mourning; but our concernment here is not to indulge a fruitless sorrow, which can neither bring him back to us, or assist our happy ascent to him, which is far more covetable, and will certainly be attained,

by continuing in those things which we have learned, knowing and considering of whom we have learned them. This excellent advice, given by the apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy, I have judged a more proper subject of your meditation on this occasion, than an encomium of your deceased pastor, whose truly humble mind made him discover an averseness to any funeral solemnities, or discourses, which had a tendency to magnify him, and gain public applause; he hated the sounding a trumpet before him, living and dying. I am not appointed to perform such a service, (though but a reasonable tribute to his memory,) only the sense of my own duty has induced me to discourse something from the scripture that hath been read, which will (through the divine blessing) assist you to improve this severe dispensation, and comply with the apparent design of his office and ministrations. 'Tis evident, that such a providence loudly proclaims the vanity of human life, the unalterable law of mortality, which must be executed on the very best inhabitants of this world; so that neither the brightest virtues, or greatest serviceableness, neither the use of the most promising means, or the most ardent and united supplications for the prolonging of life, can exempt any from the end of all the living; which therefore ought to be laid to heart; but I judge it most useful, that our meditations correspond with the character which was eminently peculiar to him, whom God hath taken away from us; and whose long excellent ministry bespeaks every one of us, in the language of the text, But continue thou in the things, &c. knowing of whom thou hast learned 'em.

'Tis generally agreed by interpreters, that the apostle, in the latter part of the verse, intends himself, and that, not only, or principally, as invested with the apostolic office, but as distinguished by something in his temper, conduct, and condition, which did strongly oblige his disciples to continue in the things they had learned, and being duly considered, would effectually engage 'em unto this practice.

The preceding context leads us to this explication, where, without once mentioning his apostolic commission, or the miraculous gifts by which he confirmed his doctrine, he only represents to Timothy, verse 10, 11. Thou hast fully known (or for a long time hast fully observed) my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me: plainly intimating, that the life and practice, the sufferings and afflictions, of one who teacheth the Gospel of Christ, carry a most cogent argument and strong efficacy to engage them who are taught, to a firm persevering in the truth and duties of the Christian religion; which were (without all doubt) the things which Timothy had learned of this apostle, whose office and design led him to teach the holy doctrine and rules of the Gospel.

The text thus cleared offers to our consideration a twofold important instruction.

I. The possibility and danger of departing from the truth, and rule of the Gospel, is supposed.

II. A suitable and (in its own nature) effectual preservative against this evil is provided, *viz.* the actual knowing and due considering of the character of him of whom they have been learned. As to the former,

1. The possibility, and danger, of forsaking the truth, and rule of the Gospel; the supposing of such a thing (in the text) might seem to carry an affront to one of Timothy's excellent piety. Him, this apostle calls his own (or legitimate) son in the faith, 1 Tim. i. 2. And his dearly beloved son, 2 Tim. i. 2. Yea, (as some learned men with great probability conclude,) the pillar and ground of the truth, 1 Tim. iii. 15. For there is no necessity of giving this character, either to a particular church, or even the universal. However that be, 'tis unquestionable that Timothy was not only a sincere, but a very eminent believer, who had made an uncommon proficiency under the teaching and institution of the apostle Paul; who thereupon did give him the office of an evangelist, (far more considerable than that of a bishop, or even a metropolitan, which hath been assigned to him without ground,) yet, notwithstanding, this exhortation to him carrieth a plain supposition, that it was (considering the case abstractly from the divine purpose possible, even for him, not to continue in the things which he had learned of such a teacher as the apostle Paul; who therefore judged it necessary to fortify him, by this earnest advice and suitable direction. And we shall perceive just reason to extend this supposition unto all, who have learned, even of the best instructors, the sacred truths and duties of the Gospel, if we reflect on the various causes of departing from them: As,

1. The native vicious inconstancy and instability of human minds. None are, by renewing grace, made perfect and delivered from all remaining defects as to the Christian state; if we are not kept and guarded by Divine power, we are in continual danger of departing from the living God. Who would have suspected any mutableness in those Israelites, who heard the majestic terrible voice of God promulgating his law on mount Sinai? (whom some [a] Jewish authors have magnified, as if they had all been advanced above the ministering angels;) on which occasion, they most solemnly obliged themselves to hear and do all that the Lord their God should speak, Deut. v. 27. And yet so unstable were their hearts, that they quickly (within less than forty days) turned aside out of the way which God had commanded them, Exod. xxxii. 8. Yea, when the Son of God, the great prophet, was raised up, and sent to the same people, among whom he was approved of God by the most stupendous miracles, (such as none other had ever wrought,) one of which, *viz.* the multiplying of the loaves, (by which many thousands were fed,) carried such convictive evidence, that the spectators professed, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world, John vi. 14. Yet the very next day, many of these very persons, who were Christ's disciples, departed from him, and walked no more with him, verse 66. On this supposition of our vicious instability, the apostle grounds the earnest advice, Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall, 1 Cor. x. 12.

2. The strong delusive workings of remaining unbelief. This root of apostacy is not totally killed and destroyed, even in those who have the spirit of faith. Hence we find the apostle cautioning them, whom he styles holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, (Heb. iii. 1.) to take heed, lest there be in them an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, verse 12. How apt are we to admit into our minds a suspicion, lest the Gospel revelation should be a cunningly devised fable, a mere invention of deceivers, who for their own interest have framed this doctrine; especially, when any are observed to pretend a zeal for it, while they deny it in their works, and turn it into an engine of advancing secular power and advantage; like those, whom the apostle describeth by this infamous character, (1 Tim. vi. 5.) counting religion to be an income, or gainful business, as that passage ought to be rendered.

3. The various discouragements which attend a constant belief and practice of the Gospel; which the apostle had his eye upon in the immediately preceding context; where he mentioneth the persecutions and afflictions, which still followed him in the discharging of his office, and subjoins, verse 12. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, by the reviling tongues, or (when God permits) by the oppressive hands of evil men: these lions, in the way of our duty, have terrified many out of it, who have been ashamed or afraid to continue in that course, which (though most unjustly) hath the reproachful name of a sect, and is every where spoken against, Acts xxviii. 22. The experience of all places and times, informs us how strong and dangerous impressions have been made, by the reproach and contempt, the cross and sufferings, which attend the faithful service of Christ; even while the memory of our Redeemer was recent, his blood, as it were, yet warm, and his apostles alive, and shining as lights in the world, there was cause of a sorrowful complaint of this kind, 2 Tim. i. 15. Thou knowest how that all they which are in Asia be turned from me. The true reason of this inexcusable deserting may be discovered in the following part of the chapter, *viz.* they were ashamed of the apostle's chain, they judged it both dishonourable and hazardous to persist in the communion of one, who gained nothing among men but disgracing bonds and distressing torments.

a Pirke R. Eliez, C. 47.

4. The strong impressions made by worldly allurements. There is not a more dangerous enemy to our souls, and which so powerfully dissuadeth from continuing in the things they have learned, (of the most excellent teachers,) than the love of this world. Wherever this prevails, it stifleth all the convictions of reason and conscience, it baffleth the force of all the arguments which demonstrate the divine original of the Gospel, and the unspeakable importance of the truths and counsels contained in it. There have been and will be many, to whom the account given of Demas is justly applicable, 2 Tim. iv. 10. Demas hath forsaken me, (and consequently, the things he had learned of me,) having loved this present world. And never, I think, was there greater danger from this snare, than in the age wherein we live: in which a paganish esteem and admiration of riches and greatness renders all the vast concerns of the other world despicable, and without force. 'Tis most amazing, that Christians should be so blinded, as not to discern, what the pagan Cicero has complained of, *corrupti mores depravatique sunt admiratione divitiarum: the manners of men are corrupted and depraved, by the admiring of riches.*

5th, And last cause of this danger is the seduction and enticement of wicked men, which the apostle remarks in the verse immediately preceding. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, &c. 'Tis a sad reflection, that too many good men seem contented only to save their own souls, without seeking to allure and draw others into the path of life; but evil men set themselves to infect others, and engage them in the same pernicious courses: those who want learning to dispute and reason against truth and holiness, fail not to employ the little wit they have, in ridiculing the most sacred things, like the scoffers predicted by the apostle Peter, 2 Epist. iii. 3. Ungodly men, walking after their own lusts, who supply the want of argument by profane jests and raillery on the Gospel, and those who seriously and heartily believe it. To which they often add the enticing baits of liberty, pleasure, and gain, which carry a mighty force, especially with younger persons, whose age makes them unsuspicious and inconsiderate. Hence, so many in their youth quite cast off all the bands of a pious education, whilst they guard not against the dangerous enticements of sinners, which is earnestly enjoined by the royal preacher, Prov. i. 10. whose notorious defection from the worship of God is assigned unto this cause, 1 Kings xi. 5, 6.

Having thus represented the danger of not continuing in the things which have been learned of those who have instructed us in our holy religion: we proceed,

II. To consider the preservative against this danger, laid down in the latter part of the text, knowing (or considering) of whom thou hast learned them, *q. d.* I apprehend thou wilt be strongly tempted to desert the doctrine and practice which have been delivered to thee; but if thou duly rememberest my character and conduct, how I have demeaned myself, in my whole course, this will be an apt and suitable means to establish thy resolution of adhering to the things thou hast learned of me. In discoursing on this apostolic prescription, we shall,—1. State the proper efficacy of the preservative in its general nature.—2. Lay down the particular characters of a teacher, which most directly contribute unto the preserving from the danger mentioned. The former is necessary to prevent mistake, the latter to engage and animate our holy purpose of continuing in the truth and duty of the Gospel. As to,

1. The stating and explaining the proper efficacy of what is described, to preserve us from the danger above related, it will be useful to observe the following particulars.

(1.) That this is not to be understood, as if the bare authority of any ordinary teacher were a sufficient ground of obligation to continue in the things we have learned of him. This can't be supposed, without a most dangerous altering the very nature of faith, which is always to be built on a divine testimony, as the apostle asserts, Rom. x. 17. So then faith cometh by hearing, (or testimony,) and hearing by the word of God. We ought not to give this deference to even an angel from heaven, much less to the most excellent teachers, that their single authority should oblige us. We are commanded by our Lord, in this sense, to call no man our father upon earth, (Matt. xxiii. 9.) *i. e.* not to admit any one whomsoever (who acts in his own name) to have a dominion over our faith: only the supreme original truth, the blessed God speaking by his Son, and those whom he commissioneth, is absolutely to be relied on. The Bereans are dignified with the title of noble, or high-born persons, because when the apostle Paul first preached to 'em, they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so, Acts xvii. 11. Much more is it our duty to examine all that we learn of our ministers, by the same infallible rule, that we may not be the real disciples of any other master besides him whose name is put on us in our baptism. Our faith, and persevering obedience to the Gospel, must not stand in the wisdom (or authority) of men, but in the power (and veracity) of God, 1 Cor. ii. 5.

(2.) This is to be understood in subordination to the internal effectual agency of the Divine Spirit, by whom, as the principal efficient, God doth stablish all believers in Christ, as the apostle asserts, 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. The sealing and impressing of our minds and hearts by the heavenly signet, is absolutely needful unto our continuing in the things we have learned; all our own efforts and endeavours will never preserve us from defection and drawing back unto perdition, without the powerful working of the Holy Spirit, who alone can fix our wavering minds, and furnish with strength to resist and overcome the most dangerous assaults that we can be exposed to: therefore the apostle, besides this seasonable counsel to Timothy, earnestly prayeth for him, last verse of this epistle, The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit; as knowing, that without the inward vital presence of the Redeemer, all other helps will be insufficient and unsuccessful; and we are obliged to add unto our use of the means here prescribed, fervent and continued supplication, for obtaining the mighty aid of the Divine Spirit, whom God hath graciously promised to give to those who ask him, Luke xi. 13. But,

(3.) The efficacy of such a knowing and considering of him of whom we have learned, deriveth (in the usual method of Providence) from the native prevalent force of example: when the practice of a minister agreeth with his doctrine, this doth strongly recommend and impress the things that are taught by him; whereas a practice that is contrary to the most holy rules and instructions, shuts up and bars the hearts of those who observe this disagreement. Hence the blessed God, while he spake by prophets, called none to the prophetic office but holy persons, as we read, Luke i. 70. 2 Pet. i. 21. And 'tis well known, that where the qualifications of officers in Christian churches are described, the principal stress is laid upon a holy and unblamable life, 1 Tim. iii. Tit. i. On this design, that the example of those who teach others, might powerfully convey their doctrine into the very hearts and consciences of men. And this consideration gives a sad occasion of observing, how great a judgment and tremendous plague a vicious ungodly ministry is to a people, which usually are much more influenced by the manners of their teachers, than by all the arguments and counsels which are proposed by them: one straying guide, who himself leads the way in a course of sin, draws many after him into the same destructive path. This provoked the terrible displeasure of God against the Jewish priests, against whom he draws a most severe charge, Mal. ii. 8. But ye have departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law. Not the greatest learning or moving eloquence, not the most accurate observing of external forms, can compensate for a defect as to holiness of conversation; which leads to the

(4.) And last reflection, *viz.* That the knowing and considering of the Christian practice of a teacher, is a most apt means to prevent or remove prejudices against the things which have been learned. Constant experience attests the truth of this. Many have acknowledged that it was their observing the justice and temperance, the patience and humility of those who suffered as evil-doers, which convinced them of the divine authority of the Christian doctrine. Therefore the glorious Founder of the Christian church did not only furnish the first publishers of the Gospel with the prophetic spirit, and miraculous gifts, of the Holy Ghost, but replenished them with all the

fruits of righteousness and universal goodness. They could make a just and safe appeal to all who had opportunity of observing in the apostle's language, 1 Thess. ii. 10. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. 'Tis a very memorable passage which I have met with in a learned and judicious author, [b] "If the Gospel (saith he) were now to be planted again, all the miracles in the world, I think, would not make it take, while our morals are as they are. A miracle may strike a little wonderment at first, but good morality, (*i. e.* a holy conversation,) it sinks, it soaks to the heart. Perverseness may say a miracle is from the devil; but who can say that good morality is from the devil?" This will be sufficient, I hope, to prevent mistake, concerning the nature and kind of that efficacy which belongs to the means here directed to. I now proceed in the

2. Place, to lay down the particular characters of a teacher, which most directly recommend and impress the things which have been learned of him; which will bring the discourse to the sorrowful circumstances of our present state: where (as I have before signified) I shall not attempt to draw a full description of him, whose decease we justly lament, (which is always a considerable part of a funeral discourse,) but confine myself to some short memorials of him, which agree with my present design; which will be of far greater advantage to you, than to hear his just praises set forth by the tongues of men and of angels: this latter could only yield an evanid delight, which can no ways contribute to our chief interest, I mean the salvation of our souls, which, through divine assistance, will be furthered by the following account of those special characters which are most apt to engage unto a continuing in the things that we have learned: As,

(1.) Knowledge in the mystery of Christ, a clear understanding of the counsel of God, that relates to the salvation of lost sinners. Without this, an honest mind may deceive others, because itself is liable to be deceived. This our apostle appeals unto, in the first place, where he makes a description of himself, ver. 10. Thou hast fully known my doctrine; (*i. e.* how consonant to the Scriptures;) and puts the Ephesians in mind, that he was furnished with this sacred knowledge, by which he was rendered a wise master-builder in the house of God, Eph. iii. 3. I shall not flatter your late teacher, when I affirm, that God had given him an uncommon skill in the word of righteousness, from whence he always drew all that he taught. He had peculiar advantages for understanding the oracles of God, a large fund of natural endowments, improved by superadded preparatives unto the study of the Scriptures; a rich treasure of human learning; (despised by none but the ignorant;) particularly, a thorough knowledge of pagan theology, by which he was enabled to descry the shortness and mistakes of human reason; which faculty he very well understood to use, in subordination unto Christian faith, whose mysteries he was able to free from the objections of cavillers.

But that which most of all assisted his searching and right understanding of the Scriptures, was his very early and growing exemplary piety, which hath the promise of divine teaching and illumination. He took care to wash the vessel, that it might be receptive of divine communications. To all these, he added unwearied diligence, humility, and prayer, which was the delight and solace of his whole life. In such a course, he was safe from the illusions of fancy, and the specious errors that many great wits have been entangled with. His very excellent useful writings are a public testimony of this thing; most justly might he use the apology made by the apostle Paul, when he was censured and reproached with being mad; I am not mad, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness, Acts xxvi. 25. This wisdom enabled him to confirm the truths of the Gospel with proper and most convincing evidence, and represent the Christian scheme in its native unexceptionable comeliness. And should we not continue in the things we have learned of such a scribe, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven?

(2.) A second character, which has a peculiar aptness to recommend and impress divine things, is godly sincerity, with which all the first publishers of the Gospel were adorned, and it did most eminently shine in the conduct of the apostle Paul, who takes frequent occasion to mention it, because some, either from ignorance or malice, taxed him with the want of it, as if he had acted according to worldly politics, 2 Cor. i. 12. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom,—we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. And he more largely insists on this qualification of those who have the office of instructing others, 1 Thess. ii. 3, 4, 5, 6. I know the imputation of insincerity, and hypocrisy, hath been very frequent, against the most upright excellent servants of God; thus when the accuser could not fasten a charge on the life of holy Job, he taxed him with a mercenary and insincere disposition of mind, Job i. Doth Job serve God for nought?

[c] The wise counsel of God permits these unrighteous and very uneasy accusations, to exercise and demonstrate the reality and truth of his servants' love and devotedness to him; of which your deceased pastor gave most convictive evidences throughout the whole course of his ministry, by a noble and generous contemning of the world, and secular advantages, and a steady aiming at the honour of God, in all his conduct and ministrations; so that the character given of a learned and excellent defender of the [d] protestant cause, doth truly belong to him, *viz.* Many excellencies there were in him, for which his memory remains; but above all was his crown, that he unfeignedly sought God's glory, and the good of men's souls; and nothing doth so strongly recommend the things that we have learned, as an assurance of the holy sincerity of the teacher, who can have no design to corrupt the word of God, for the sake of the greatest worldly advantage. Vid. 2 Cor. ii. 17. For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ. We have known few in our age, to whom this solemn protestation of the apostle is more truly applicable than to him, of whom you have learned; and what can justify the not continuing in the things taught by him?

(3.) A third character, which directly contributes to this purpose, is an ardent affection unto them who are taught. Nothing doth so certainly open and captivate the hearts of men, as love when 'tis apprehended. Very eminent were the apostle Paul, and his fellow-labourers, for this disposition, 1 Thess. ii. 8. Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to impart to you not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, (*i. e.* lives) because ye were dear to us. Nothing could rise higher than what we read, Rom. ix. 3. For I could wish that myself were accursed for my brethren; where 'tis not to be supposed, that the apostle, a most sincere and fervent lover of Christ, could intend an eternal separation from Christ, which is all one with damnation; but he only meant a bodily destruction for the sake of Christ, such as they suffered who were accursed or devoted unto death. Vid. Lev. xxvii. 29. Numb. xxi. 2, 3. I can truly profess, that I have not known any one, who hath so nearly resembled this pattern as he whom we lament. How naturally, and with inward solicitude, did he care for your estate! How oft hath he ministered in this place, when his infirmities made such a service hazardous to his life! Which he did not count dear to himself, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry he had received for the saving of souls; for which he had the most tender regard, to the disregarding of all other and lower interests. We may justly apply to him the account given by this apostle of Epaphroditus, Phil. ii. 30. For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life. I might mention various instances of this most tender and fervent love to souls; as his impartial and faithful reproving of sin, without respect of persons; his easiness of access, his condescending to the lowest, and indeed becoming all things to all, that he might gain the more. But I must not omit that bright evidence of his divine love

[b] Garbutt.

[c] F. Paul relateth that pope Adrian (one of the honestest of his order) charged Luther, and his followers, with hypocrisy, and acting against conscience, in which they were persuaded of the certain truth of the Romish tenets, but dissembled their sentiments—in sua conscientia teneasero per indubitate l' opinione Romane fingendo altrimente: E pero essere cosa facillima estinguere quella dottrina, che non era fondatà, salvo che sopra gl' interessi. Istoria del Concilio de Trento. L. 1.—That pope hath not been singular in his censure, than which nothing could be more unjust.

[d] Chillingworth.

to men, I mean his readiness to assist all the necessitous and distressed, that he had opportunity of doing good unto. Very few have been so governed as he, by the apophthegm of our Lord, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Acts xx. 35. His charity was not a narrow spring, limited and confined to a small spot, but, like an ocean, sent forth refreshing streams without distinction. How often have the bowels of our persecuted brethren in a neighbouring kingdom, those generous confessors of the faith, been refreshed by his concern for them! When it is the reproachful character of our age, that all seek their own things, are intent on building their own houses, and raising their families, he was intent on building up living temples unto God, in all the ways which might contribute to the present and everlasting happiness of men. In this course he not only laid up for himself an undecaying treasure in heaven, but used the best method to entail a divine blessing on all his offspring. Surely the instructions, the counsels, and exhortations of such a one, ought never to be forgotten or slighted, when they could proceed from no other principle than a most unfeigned love to God, and affection to those among whom he laboured.

(4.) A fourth recommending character of a minister of the Gospel, is Christian patience under afflictions and sufferings. When any suffer death for the truth of Christ, they gain the glorious titles of martyrs, or witnesses of Christ, whose doctrine they seal with their blood. The Divine Providence hath taken care that the Christian faith should not want this evidence, both at its first planting, and at the time when it was rescued from antichristian corruptions. The apostle in the preceding context lays great stress on this thing, verse 10, 11. Thou hast fully known my—long-suffering, patience—persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me,—what persecutions I endured, *i. e.* was not a mere compelled patient, but underwent them with becoming submission and fortitude. Indeed, God was not pleased to call forth his servant (lately withdrawn from us) unto the fiery trial, but he was furnished with patience, and fortitude of mind, able to encounter the most grievous sufferings. 'Tis reasonable to conclude, that the afflicting hand of God did so long and variously chasten him, not so much for his own profit, as that he might be an eminent example of a truly Christian patience, under very sharp afflictions. All the violent pains he endured, all the tedious hours he passed in his former and last sickness, did not draw one impatient expression from him, but even then, his adoring praises of God did instruct and confirm others. This was a seal which he affixed to the doctrine taught by him, which therefore we ought to continue in.

(5.) A fifth and last character, which strongly recommends the things which we have been taught, is a final joyful perseverance in the Christian course. It was on this design that the apostle giveth this account of himself; chap. iv. of this epistle, verse 7. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. The very same language did agree to your excellent pastor. If he had fainted, or retracted at last, this must have much weakened the force of the things he taught, and your obligation to continue in them. But the Divine grace enabled him to finish his course with uncommon joy. As he had always exercised an inviolable reverence for his own conscience, whose purity and peace he preferred above the most tempting advantages, so few ever more experienced a divine peace, and serenity of mind, at the nearest approaches of death: the sentence of it, when he received it in himself, did not dismay him: he needed no consolations from men; but, as aged holy Simeon, (Luke ii. 29.) only leave from his Lord to depart, and be admitted into his immediate presence, who hath now openly approved this good and faithful servant, and caused him to enter into his own joy.

Let us now, in the fear of God, lay these considerations to heart, that such excellent labours as we have enjoyed may not be lost, or turn into accusing witnesses against us another day. Our continuing in the things we have learned of him, will be the best improvement of our unspeakable loss, and hereby shall we show the truest respect to his memory, that he may not only live in his offspring and useful writings, but in the truly Christian conversation of those who were related to him, or had opportunity of learning of him. In order to which, I shall subjoin a few persuasive considerations. As,

I. It ought to have great weight in your minds, that the things you learned of him are the most important and uncontroverted truths of the Gospel; he did not entertain you with doubtful disputations, or debates concerning external forms and modes of religion. His great soul could not descend to these little things. He hath expressed himself fully on this subject, in the dedication of Delighting in God, and preface to the Carnality of Religious Contention; which latter breathes so heavenly a charity and concern for the truly Christian interest, that a very eminent divine of the established church, did profess a willingness to lay down his own life, if such a state of things, as is there described, might obtain among Christians. God is witness, and you with many others also, that his public ministrations were wholly taken up in opening and applying the principles of the Oracles of God, (which he did with inimitable clearness and judiciousness,) and in describing and pressing the unquestionable duties of men and Christians; such as love to God and our neighbour, repentance, faith, Christian vigilance, prayer, humility, and holy fear, with which our salvation is to be wrought out, still inculcating the absolute necessity of Christ's mediation, and the renewing, assisting influence of the Holy Spirit, which he showed to be consistent with, yea, obligatory unto, our earnest endeavours after conversion, and eternal life. Which last he largely pressed in many discourses on Rom. ii. 7. Very frequently he cautioned against those three dangerous rocks, (that prove fatal to many souls,) *viz.* a sensual life, formality in religion, and unfruitfulness in the Christian profession. And is there any of all these, which you ought to be ashamed or unwilling to continue in? Can the reason or judgment of men frame a just objection against such a course? Nay, will not that man stand self-condemned, who having once learned such important, undoubted truths, departs from them, through any temptations whatsoever? Add to this, in the

2nd place, The convincing demonstration he produced to satisfy reason and conscience. He was an avowed enemy to a blind implicit faith, as also to a blind devotion. And none had a better skill to set in the best light the rational evidences, which confirm the principles and duties, both of natural and revealed religion, of which his published writings are a convincing witness; and his ordinary discourses, though clothed with familiar language, were not inferior as to strength of reasoning. So that it could not be charged on him, that he preached to the fancy, or only aimed to move the affections; for he always first addressed to the judgment and conscience; so that if the Gospel which was taught by him remains hid, to any who attended his ministry, it is hid to those who are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not—because by manifestation of the truth he commended (or approved) himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God; as the apostle speaks of himself and his fellow-labourers, 2 Cor. iv. 2, 3, 4. Again,

3dly, Reflect on the very manner of his teaching, how earnest, how moving, how pungent, how persuasive was his language and expression? It might plainly be discerned, that he spake from his very heart; not as pleasing the ear or imagination, (which his rare wit and eloquence enabled him to do,) but as seeking the eternal happiness of souls. What is said concerning the famed tract of a [e] Stoic philosopher, that it was so moving and operative, that if any were not wrought on, he could only be reformed by the tribunals of the other world, (the author speaks according to the [f] Platonic hypothesis,) is applicable in this case. It may almost be despaired, that those who refused and rejected the message brought by him, but retained hard and obdurate hearts, should be persuaded to repentance, and holiness, by any other ministry.

4. It ought further to be considered, that the things learned of him, were a most precious trust or *depositum* committed to those who have learned them. The original term [g] ἐπιστεύθης, which is translated, *hast been assured*, in some Greek copies, by a small variation is changed into a verb that signifieth to commit or intrust; and this reading

e Epictetus. f Simplicius.

g ἐπιστεύθης, sc. V. Latin, French.

hath been preferred by some translations. This can't be questioned, that divine truths, and instructions, have the character of a sacred trust, which is to be preserved with utmost care and fidelity. The very light of nature, the dictates of reason, discover this obligation; so that all agree in condemning the base injustice of him, who betrays a trust, and is negligent in preserving that which is deposited with him, and the crime is judged the more heinous and inexcusable, but how much the *depositum*, the thing committed to another, is more precious and valuable. Who but a blinded infidel, will deny the incomparable value of sacred and divine truths, which are of a heavenly original, and are a principal treasure committed to the church. How solemn a charge was given to Timothy, 1 Tim. vi. 20. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust. And it is repeated, 2 Tim. i. 14. That good thing which was committed to thee, keep; *q. d.* give all diligence to guard the excellent *depositum* of the Gospel, which thou hast been intrusted with. The same obligation is laid on us, who learned the same Gospel, which must deserve a far more solicitous concern than any of the precious and admired treasures of this earth, which are guarded with greatest care. But if we continue not in the things we have learned, we are guilty of the worst injustice, and unfaithfulness to others, and of greatest unkindness to ourselves; for the things we have learned, are not made our property, to do with 'em as we please; but we are obliged to transmit them to others of the succeeding age, that they who rise up after us may enjoy the same blessed advantages, Psal. lxxviii. 5, 6. How great is the crime of a parent, who having received a fair patrimony, or honour, doth waste the estate, and forfeit the honour, which he ought to transmit to those who are to succeed him. If those of this generation should betray the civil rights and liberties of the nation, which have been transmitted by their ancestors, and entail poverty and slavery on the succeeding generations; how unpardonable would such a conduct be judged! But the depriving of posterity of the light and efficacy of Gospel truth, is an injury, an injustice unspeakably greater: because the former only affects the temporal and lesser interests of men, but the latter endangers their souls, and eternal felicity: and who would not tremble at the thought of such guilt, if he really believes, and expects a future judgment, in which a severe account must be given of this sacred talent, that hath been intrusted with him? What answer shall he give in the day of accounts, who was very solicitous and diligent to guard every other trust, to transmit with great fidelity, houses, lands, trade, and such low matters, but was unfaithful to his principal charge, and (as much as lay in him) by not continuing in the things himself had learned, suffered the Gospel to fail and be lost out of this world? In the

5th and last place, Without continuing in the things you have learned of your deceased pastor, you cannot come where he now is. The present separation is matter of just sorrow, that we shall see his face (on earth) no more: but what must an everlasting separation be? To behold him shining as the sun in the kingdom of his Father, and yourselves cast into outer darkness: to see him crowned with never-fading life and glory, and yourselves shut up in the place of torment: what heart can bear the very thought? But nothing is more unquestionable, than that there is but one passage, one path to heaven, where he had never come, if he had not continued himself in the things which he first learned, and afterwards taught. Nay, if you should depart from the holy truth and duty, in which you have been instructed by him; notwithstanding the tender love he bore to you, he must stand forth as a witness and accuser, to aggravate your guilt, and greaten your condemnation. I shall conclude with the advice of the apostle, to his dearly beloved Philippians, applied to the present subject, Phil. iv. 9. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in him, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

THE PRINCIPLES OF

THE ORACLES OF GOD.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

CONTAINING

I. AN INTRODUCTION, PROVING THE NECESSITY OF THEIR BEING TAUGHT, IN TWO LECTURES, ON HEB. V .2.
TH
II. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, MANIFEST FROM THE CREATION, IN FOUR LECTURES, ON ROMANS I. 20.

III. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES, IN FOUR LECTURES, ON 2 TIMOTHY III. 16.

IV. THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD, IN TWO LECTURES, ON JAMES II. 19.

V. THE TRINITY OF PERSONS IN THE DIVINE ESSENCE, IN FOUR LECTURES, ON JOHN V. 7.

VI. THE ATTRIBUTES AND PERFECTIONS OF THE DIVINE BEING, IN NINE LECTURES, ON MATTHEW V. 48.

THE PRINCIPLES OF

THE ORACLES OF GOD.

PART I.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following important discourses on "The Principles of the Oracles of God," were first published in 1814, by the Rev. John Hunt, from the original manuscripts preserved in Dr. Williams's library; and their appearance in the present edition of the Works of Howe will without doubt be generally acceptable.

In many instances posthumous publications have added little to the celebrity of their authors, and sometimes they have been most injurious to their reputation. But there are no grounds for apprehension, that the well-deserved fame of John Howe will be disparaged, by the publication of writings, which had not the advantages of his own careful preparation for the press. In these, as well as in his other discourses, being dead he yet speaks. The same originality of thought, depth of piety, and fervent glow of expression are here discernible. The serious and judicious reader still finds himself contemplating the truths upon which the Temple of God is raised, and still feasting upon the Blessedness of the Righteous; nor can he retire from the survey of these intellectual treasures without the deepest impression of the grandeur of that mind, and the goodness of that heart, which collected these stores, and poured them forth to bless generations yet unborn.

The publishers of the present complete edition of the Works of Howe are therefore fully satisfied, that in adding these discourses to this volume, they are meeting the wishes and gratifying the expectations of the religious public, while at the same time the honour of the esteemed author is untarnished.

LECTURE I.*

Hebrews v. 12.

YE HAVE NEED THAT ONE TEACH YOU AGAIN, WHICH BE THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD.

My design is to open unto you the principles of Christian religion, and for an introduction hereunto, I have pitched on this passage, without any intention to accuse (much less to upbraid) any in particular, with ignorance of those principles; but only in the general, and indefinitely, to show the necessity of their being taught. And considering the matter abstractly, without reference to this or that people, or to this or that age, whether they be Jewish or Hebrew Christians that did need to be so taught; or whether they be English or London Christians in particular; my design is only in general to assert, the necessity of being taught such principles: that some time or other they be taught, and we be instructed in them. And if they have been taught, that they be taught again, (as the apostle's expression here is,) that you be taught again, taught over and over, for these are things that we cannot too thoroughly have learned, or be too much versed in.

For the expressions here used,—"the oracles of God," and "the first principles" of those oracles—there is not much of obscurity in them. The word rendered *oracles*, doth by universal consent (as well in pagan as Christian and sacred writers) signify divine revelations. It was the word among pagans by which it was usual for them to express the responses of their gods, or those they took to be such. It generally signifies what is divinely revealed, or understood, or taken to be so, nor is therefore the addition "of God," needless or useless. Such pleonasms are ornative of speech, especially when they render the same thing more emphatically so, than if there were not that pleonastical addition. And besides, inasmuch as there are many (as the apostle speaks) that are called gods, and are worshipped as gods, the oracles of God are taken to be from God. And when he saith "the oracles of God," (as the article may be well held, and often is to be understood emphatically,) it may be understood, the oracles of *the* God; he that is really so called, or to be called. And so it is an expression of latitude enough to take in what is of natural revelation, and what is of supernatural revelation; for what is of natural revelation is as truly from God as the other. All truth is from the first truth, there is no beam of light but what proceeds from the Father of lights in whatsoever way it comes.

And then for the word here rendered *principles*, that is wont to be mentioned in as great latitude as can be supposed; it signifies all sorts of principles, whether of nature, or of art, or science whatsoever: and whereas, the apostle speaks here (as we render it) of the *first* principles; literally, it is the principles of the *beginning*, and that imports to us, that he did intend those principles in a very great latitude, all from first to last that can come under that notion, or within that compass. There is a chain or subordination of principles, even in principles themselves, as we shall have occasion, more hereafter, to take notice of: there are former, and there are latter principles. First principles do suppose within this compass, that there may be latter and last principles, but plain it is, that the apostle doth here intend principles of religion, and chiefly of Christian religion, but not solely. That is, principles of

* Preached November 7th, 1680.

Christian religion, partly whereof it doth consist, and that are peculiar and appropriate to it; and partly, such as it doth suppose, such as it doth necessarily pre-suppose, that may be common with it, either to the Jewish religion while it was to stand, and that still (as being common to that religion with Christianity) are to stand; as whatsoever is common with the Jewish religion, with Christianity must be perpetual; or which is common with natural religion, which we must understand in nature to be before Jewish or Christian. And even in time too, as to positive instructions, that which was natural did precede the other.

That therefore which I intend to ground upon this passage, you may take briefly thus—That there are principles of religion that need to be taught. And in pursuance of this I shall here,

I. Say somewhat more generally of these principles.

II. Show the necessity of their being taught.

III. Speak something of the way of teaching them: and then,

IV. Make application.

I. Of these principles themselves: I shall show there are such—and what they are—and of what kind.

1. That there are such, is a thing without all doubt. There is nothing, no created thing, but hath its principles: principles of being there are belonging to it. Every complete substance that exists in the world, and is a created one, must be supposed to have such principles, and hath such generative and effective principles, and constructive principles: the principles from which it did proceed, and the principles of which it doth exist. There are also principles of knowledge as well as being. There is no piece of knowledge, no sort of science, but hath its principles, as you all know. And therefore religion, Christian religion, theology, Christian theology, must have its principles too. It is a science, a practical one, and of most absolute and universal necessity, and its principles must therefore be supposed of the most absolute and universal necessity too. Every piece of knowledge is not every one's business; but this is every one's business, to know God, to know how he may be saved, how it may be well with him to eternity.

2. But what are these principles? It is my present business to tell you of what sort they are. What they are particularly, that we must do by degrees as we come to them. Now you may judge of what sort they are by what the apostle mentioneth in this context; and by the reference this passage, in the beginning of the 6th chapter, hath to that we are upon, we must suppose him to be still speaking of the first principles of the oracles of God. It may be thought strange that he should mention here things so small in their own nature as baptisms (not baptism but baptisms) and the laying on of hands, as if they were to come into the number of the first principles; not of principles only, but of the first principles.

To this I shall only say, I cannot think that was at all meant by the apostle, that they should be so taken for any of those principles. You are to consider to whom the apostle writes this epistle, namely, to the Jews. These two, baptisms and the laying on of hands, were anciently and (as we know) originally Jewish rites, transferred into the Christian church afterwards. And so the meaning of the apostle is only this; "I will not stand to lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, especially not to you who have been instructed in these things all along so distinctly, they being nothing else but the doctrine of baptisms, and the laying on of hands:" and then goes on to the other two; that baptisms and laying on of hands did continually instruct them (as usages that did obtain among themselves) as to repentance from dead works and faith towards God, as it is here expressed. And so these words are very fitly to be rendered by way of parenthetical opposition to those that do immediately go before, that is, "not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith towards God, (being the doctrines of baptisms and laying on of hands, or the things which baptisms and the laying on of hands, heretofore so frequently used among you, did signify,) or the resurrection of the dead or of eternal judgment." So there are but four mentioned of the first principles of the oracles of God. Against this way of reading this passage I meet but with one objection, and that is, the want of the Greek article before doctrine here; but that is so little an objection, if we consider how many greater ellipses there are, that are frequent in Scripture, that it seems too light to be put into the balance against the weighty reason that is to be given for the other reading.

But it may be said then, What! are there but four principles, as such, which have reference to the whole business of Christianity, which the apostle's discourse here must have final and determinate reference unto? "Repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment;" are there no more than these?

Yes, undoubtedly there are, but it was none of the apostle's design to give an enumeration of those principles, but to give an instance of such as he did not now intend to insist upon, but to waive and pass by. He only tells us this was not his principal business and design to deliver such principles, and he tells at the same time, what he thought fit to waive, while his discourse is moving forward to the information he would give them concerning the Melchisidekian priesthood of Christ; to which (after some warm discourse in the greater part of the 5th chapter) he comes in the close of that, and pursues in the seventh chapter.

3. But that I may show more distinctly what kind of principles the apostle here hath reference to, take these considerations:

(1.) It is plain that they must be meant of doctrinal principles, principles of doctrine that are to be received into the mind and understanding. There are those that are doctrinal, and there are those that are practical principles. It is true indeed, all principles of the Christian religion are remotely practical, because the main end of Christianity is practice. But the difference between a doctrinal principle and a practical, lies here, that supposing a doctrinal principle to have reference to practice, to serve towards it at a distance, yet a practical principle is that from which action doth immediately proceed. As now, if we speak to the very heads themselves that the apostle speaks of, "repentance from dead works, and faith towards God," the doctrine concerning these makes one sort of principle, and the habit another; the habit of faith, and the habit of repentance, that is a principle in the soul from which the acts of these immediately proceed. But the more essential doctrine concerning both these, must make the doctrinal principle concerning them; as there may be doctrinal principles about the most practical things, and those are the doctrinal principles, as such, that are here intended, and which are to be the matter of teaching: which are to be taught, as the apostle speaks. It is very true that the papists do very industriously make it their business to overthrow that distinction of fundamental and extra-fundamental doctrines; of those that are essential and those that are extra-essential; such as are of absolute necessity, and such as are not necessary, or not so necessary. And they mightily insist and urge to have a catalogue particularly of those which we would have to go under the notion of fundamentals: because they think they could cavil and contend about any such catalogue that should be given, and look upon it as impossible there should be any so unexceptionably given, that nothing should be said against it, why this or that is taken in, or why such and such things should be left out. Therefore they would conclude there ought to be no such distinction; which is the most absurd thing that can be imagined; for to take away the distinction of fundamental and extra-fundamental is to suppose one of these two things. Either it must suppose that there is nothing necessary in Christian religion, which is a very strange supposition that there should be any such religion wherein nothing should be necessary; or it must suppose all things equally necessary, all necessary alike: and so that it were equally necessary that we know Salathiel to be the son of Neri, as to know that Jesus is the Son of God. But there needs no more to be said at present to this, than that whatsoever is necessary in point of doctrine to the soul's acting of "repentance from dead works, and faith towards God;" (for the two things that follow are no matter of our exercise. The raising of the dead and the eternal judgment are no part of our duty; but our duty is summed up in these two, repentance and

faith;) whatsoever, I say, is necessary in point of doctrine to the soul's being exercised in one or other of these with the understanding and judgment of a reasonable creature, so much is necessary to make a doctrinal principle; whatever leads the soul into the exercise of repentance and faith, so much must be necessary under the head of doctrinal principles concerning our duty. It is true we must know the other things too as motives to it, but these are to have the immediate influence upon things to be done. And I might more shortly say, whatever is necessary to bring the soul into union with God through Christ, all that knowledge that is necessarily antecedent to this, so much comes within the compass of what is fundamental in our religion; and indeed nothing comes within that compass but what is one way or other reducible to this, that must not one way or other have influence upon repentance and faith. And I add,

(2.) That as concerning these, some may be more deeply fundamental than others are, even of those that are of equal necessity. That is, there are principles that in reference to things depending on them have that notion of principles, and are to be so considered, that yet may be consequential to other things on which they do depend. As in the building of a house (which is the metaphor the apostle, in this context, makes use of) there may be some parts that may be both fundamental to what is upon them, and superstructive in reference to what lies under them. And,

(3.) These principles may be partly of natural and partly of supernatural revelation. Of natural, that there is a God. Of supernatural, that Jesus is the Son of God. Though what is of natural revelation doth not comprehend what is of supernatural, yet all that is of supernatural takes in and includes all that is natural too. The same thing may be supernaturally revealed, and naturally; as the same conclusion may be both believed and known. And again,

(4.) They are generally the plainest things that are to go for such principles. God hath so graciously ordered it, that that which is most necessary should be most plain. Indeed some may object themselves here, the doctrine of the Trinity; but as concerning that, I hope, when we come to it, it will appear that what God hath said about that is very plain; though what men have said and devised about it, is obscure and intricate enough, even what they mean for the explication of it. And I only add this, for the present, concerning these principles,

(5.) They must be supposed to be but few. The first principles, or the great principles of religion, do lie in a very little compass: as that which goes amongst us in the name of the apostles' creed (you know) is very short; and of antiquity deceive us not) was much shorter than it is. Though it is true that the variety of apprehensions and sentiments, and the great dissensions and manifold errors, that have in after-times sprung up in the Christian church, have occasioned the enlargements of creeds and multiplying of articles of faith; varying them this way or that, to meet with this or that wrong sentiment as they have been apprehended; yet the things that are in themselves necessary, must needs be but few. And if the Christian religion ever return to itself, and be what at first it was, simple, pure, plain, unmixed, undoubtedly the sum and substance of it will be found to lie in very little compass. It hath sadly degenerated in point of efficacy, and vigour, and power, as it hath been increased and augmented in point of necessary doctrines; men rendering such doctrines necessary, or bestowing that notion upon them arbitrarily as they have thought fit. And indeed the state of Christian religion hath never been flourishing since (as one very accurately observes in the last age) it became *res ingeniosa fore Christianum; a thing of wit to be a Christian.* So much at present for the kinds and sorts of these principles. But now,

II. For the necessity of their being taught; as to that, little needs to be said.

1. That the things themselves are necessary is out of question. If any religion be necessary, its principles must much so, especially if first principles. And more,

2. This doth plainly infer therefore the necessity of their being taught; else how should we come by them? And though there is somewhat pre-supposed to our religion that natural, it is but pre-supposed as fundamental to all that is necessary to be superadded, for there is not enough within the compass of nature to lead men to blessedness, if there be not great super-additions. And what we have not by nature, how should we come by it, if we are not taught it? if we do not learn it? We read of great promises in Scripture of being taught of God. "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me," as it is in that, John vi. 45. quoted from the prophet Isaiah, liv. 13. "Thy children shall be all taught of the Lord." And "It is written in the prophets, they shall be taught of God:" and then it followeth, "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." And so we read Jeremiah xxxi. 34. as that which is foretold to be the great blessing of a time then future, (and for ought I see, yet future,) that there should be no saying, "Know the Lord." They should not need to teach one another, saying, "Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest;" quoted by the apostle, Heb. viii. 11. But even such teaching is teaching still. He is the great Teacher; and who teacheth like him? But as to subordinate teaching or human teaching, there is nothing in all these promises that can exclude it. And when it is said, "They shall all be taught of God," and that they shall not need any to teach them, the meaning is, that there shall be a greater inclination in men's spirits to learn. Not that they shall know it without teaching, but that an aptitude to learn, shall be given them more generally than had been given, and (so far as we can observe) than is yet given. Men shall not need to be urged and pressed to know the Lord. No, there shall be a greater promptitude in men's minds to learn, and to use, and improve the means of knowing him, than had been before. But that there shall always, to the end of time, be use of human teaching, our Lord's own words just before his ascension plainly enough speak, Matt. xxviii. and the close; "I am with you to the end of the world." In this work it must be, "to assist you in this teaching through all successions of time to the very end of the world." But if there should be any such time or state of things on earth, wherein men should no way at all need to be taught the knowledge of God, supervening and coming; that is not yet come, we are sure we see no such time; and if any such time should come, and we should see it, I verily believe there are none of those that now are intent upon the business of teaching, but would be glad in those times to resign their office. And in the mean time nothing is plainer than so it is, and indeed nothing is plainer than so it will be to the end of the world; that there is and will be need and use of human subordinate teachers, to teach and instruct men in the principles, even the first principles of faith in Christ. But,

III. I would say somewhat concerning the way of this teaching. And there be several ways about which we might distinguish and speak to you in distinct heads; there is private teaching and public teaching; and teaching from house to house, and teaching in public assemblies; there is teaching by continued discourse, and teaching in a way of interlocution, by way of question and answer, that to which the name of catechising is now generally appropriated, though indeed without ground from the word itself, or the proper significancy of the word. And this is indeed, in the account of many, a very formidable and frightful work, the work of catechising. I do not know why it should be so formidable a thing for one person to converse with another, to put questions and return answers; for is not this the usual way of common conversation? And why should it be more formidable to us to converse thus about the things of God, than about other things that we count necessary, and about many things that we cannot so much as count so? But there can be surely nothing more necessary than religion and the things that concern it. I am for my part very far from that imperious and terrifying way of managing such a work as this, to affright people and make them afraid of it. And indeed were I engaged in such work, I should as leave they should catechise me as I them, if questions could be so judiciously put as to draw forth a full explication of the matter proposed. It would be all one to me, who were the questionist and who the answerer, supposing the question be aptly put so as to draw forth the explication most fully. I should like well it should be said, Pray how is

such a thing understood, or what help may be given to understand that point more distinctly and more clearly?

And some considerations I shall give you, at present, about this way of teaching by familiar interlocution; and which indeed the exigency of the case doth require to be in a public assembly, where many meet and are convened together for that very purpose and upon that account. I would not insist upon the word, though it is a very significant word, that serves the purpose for which it is used well enough, but we find divers passages in Scripture where this word is used that fully refers to that way of teaching. And,

1. Let that be considered, Gal. vi. 6. "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth." The word there is catechised. Let him that is catechised in the word communicate to him that catechiseth; this implies it to be a stated business, that there must be continued catechising, and being catechised. The apostle, in 1 Cor. xiv. 19. useth the same word when he tells us, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I may teach others also, (the word is catechised, and he speaks of doing it in the church,) than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

2. That though another sort of word be used in that other language, when Abraham is so highly commended for instructing his household, (in Genesis xviii.) yet we are to consider what his household was, an household out of which he could draw forth (as we find upon occasion) three hundred fighting men. How vastly numerous must that family be! And when they met together for the worship of God, that must be a greater assembly than our's usually are; and his instructing was so that they should be all brought to know God and the principles of religion; which must be supposed and (as the thing speaks) must mostly be when he had them together, though there might be occasion for private instruction and admonition too.

3. There ought certainly to be a very great deference given to usages in the Christian church in the purer and primitive times of it, when Christianity was most of all itself; and we find very ancient records, even of teaching by this way of interlocution, and in public too. Origen lived very early, and it is matter notorious that he was eminent under the notion of a catechist in his time, whose business it was to teach and instruct in a catechetical way; and we are informed of divers catechists that they had in the church of Alexandria at the same time, that being, it is true, a numerous, great church, and requiring the help of many to that purpose. And all along, in the best times of the Christian church, (before popery was born into it,) we find hereupon that there were these two distinct orders of Christians, the *catechumeni* and the *fideles:* those that were catechetically instructed, and those that having been for a competent time so instructed, were found fit to be admitted into full communion; and hereupon there were particular places appointed them in the assemblies, wherein they were to stand apart by themselves in a sort of enclosure, but in the view of the rest of the assembly. And the nature of the thing doth speak, that there must always be these two orders within the compass of the Christian church, those that are under instruction are *catechumeni*, and those that, as they are fit, are taken out of them and received into full communion. A thing that nature and common prudence will so much dictate, that long before the Christian name was ever heard of in the world, we read that Pythagoras's school had the same orders, where the business was principally to teach and instruct in virtue. There were those that were Extra-syndonem and those that were Intra-syndonem; there was a *septum* or enclosure that did receive those that were looked upon to be thoroughly virtuous. His school indeed was like a church, upon that account, and commonly there were kept seven years expectants without the enclosure, not to be received (as it were) into full communion till they were very well confirmed in virtue and goodness. And thereupon, if any of those that had been received within the enclosure should afterwards degenerate and be guilty of any crimes, there was as solemn an excommunication of them as we read of any among Christians, and a funeral besides held for such a person; that is, a coffin was brought into the *auditorium*, and lamentation made over it as over one dead, dead from among them; and so such were to be humbled that way and wrought upon. And there can be no such thing as the continuance of Christianity in the world, on other terms than that there must be two such orders. And I add,

4. That it is very apparent that our Saviour's way of teaching when he was here on earth was very much in a way of interlocution, and that often in great public assemblies, as it is obvious for yourselves to take notice in evangelical history. And,

5. That Christians generally are under an express charge to be ready to give an account of the reason of their hope and faith, to any one that shall ask it, with meekness and fear; as in that, 1 Pet. iii. 15. And if they were to do it (as that direction hath more especial reference) even to enemies, to persecutors, and when it was to cost them their lives, much more to instructors and teachers, when they desire it only in order to their own help, and to the promoting and furtherance of knowledge among men. And,

6. It is very plain that they who by office are to make it their work and business to instruct others, are obliged to use all the most apt and likely means that may be most profitable and most conducing to that end and purpose. How solemn a charge is that the apostle lays on Timothy! 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." With all doctrine (as it is referred undoubtedly to both the things that go before and that follow the long-suffering) must in all reason intend, not merely the matter of doctrine, but the manner also, for there may be matters of doctrine materially to be considered, that are not so necessary to be so very much inculcated and urged. But that same all-doctrine is every way a teaching that is likely, or by which it may be more probable, that good may be done; and if there be such an obligation upon teachers, there is a correspondent obligation upon hearers, to attend thereto; yea, and that not only implied, but expressly required; "Obey them that have the rule over you," Heb. xiii. 17. Hereupon no doubt they are obliged to comply with, and to concur to set on foot, all such means and methods of instruction as may be most conducible to this end. And that this is a means proper to this end may be manifest upon several considerations. As,

(1.) That it most evidently tends to engage the minds of them that are immediately dealt with in this way, to be intent on the matter in hand; as when a question is put to me I am bound under a kind of necessity to consider it, that I may know how to make one answer or another as it is particularly and personally directed to me. There are many things that pass us by in a continued and transient discourse, that a wandering mind takes little notice of, gives little heed to; but when it is called by a particular question to this particular point, it cannot but make the mind intent upon it. As when the apostle, in the midst of his apologetical discourse before king Agrippa, applied particularly to him with that question, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" the king thought himself obliged to consider his question, and you see what kind of answer he gives, so as he never else would have thought, if that question had not been directed to himself. Such an impression did that question make on his mind.

(2.) It tends manifestly very much to engage the attention of all that hear, at such an exercise as that we are now speaking of. Every body presently gives his ear when there is a question put, "Come, what will be answered to this question?" and if it need explication, "What will be said in this case?" It makes men exert their minds, and engage their spirits a great deal more, as every one's reason and experience must tell him.

(3.) It tends very much to fix things and make them continue with those that hear and do attend on such a kind of exercise, for that very reason, because it hath set the animadversive faculties so much the more on work; and if the matter be considered, nothing is plainer, than that people do many times blame their memories very causelessly, when it is really the animadversive faculty is not used; for things that once are earnestly attended to are much more likely to be remembered, but people find fault with their

memories because they do not mind what they hear at first. If they earnestly minded what they heard, and considered things, and took them to heart, it would contribute a great deal towards the fixing of them in their memories, towards their retention of them. I believe, for the much greater part, when the badness of the memory is complained of, the fault lies elsewhere, that they did not seriously attend at the first, for things will be retained longer that have been well considered at first.

(4.) Hereupon, through the blessing of God, much more may be done towards the conversion of souls by the Gospel dispensation, when the things needful to be understood in order hereto, are *well* understood for it; for while they are not so, we speak in the dark, and people hear in the dark, and what we say to them hath an uncertain sound, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xiv. 17. They cannot tell what we mean when we speak of the weightiest and most important things belonging to the kingdom of God, but if such things be well understood at first, (as it is to be hoped they will be in this way,) then there is one great step made, one main difficulty is got over; and so it obtains in discourses that have more directly that design, to make men intend this business, and impress things upon men's hearts to the utmost, which had passed through their minds before, or were received clearly and distinctly there before. Again,

(5.) It is likewise, by consequence, likely to be the means of introducing a much more fruitful Christianity among us, for undoubtedly, religion is more lively by how much the more it is well grounded: they that do believe this or that doctrine without a ground, they commonly believe it too without fruit. If it have not a good ground it is proportionably inefficacious, and a languid thing; as seed that is sown, and hath no depth of earth, (as our Saviour speaks,) brings not forth fruit unto perfection. Therefore is that charge given unto the Colossian Christians: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him," Col. ii. 6. One notion under which we are said to receive him is as a teacher, and to receive him (though that be not all) is to receive his truths, his doctrines. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." And therefore, so rationally doth the apostle pray for them in that chapter, that they might be "fruitful in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God." And in Phil. i. 9, 10, 11. those Christians are there prayed for after the same method, that they might abound in judgment and in all knowledge, (that they might become knowing and judicious Christians,) and then, that they might abound in all the fruits of righteousness that would be, through Christ, to the praise and glory of God. And,

(6.) This would be a very great and likely means to bring Christians generally to a great deal more of seriousness in the temper of their minds and spirits, that is, to exclude and shut out vanity, replenishing their minds with great and weighty things, things that deeply concern them: for in this way, undoubtedly, such things would come to be more inwrought into their hearts, and to have a more settled abode and residence there. Then it would be as ordinary a thing when Christians did meet, to catechise one another about the things of God, and about the eternal kingdoms, (if I may use that phrase,) as to catechise one another about news, or about the state of the times; what is doing now in the country, or in the court, or in this or in any other nation or kingdom: the kingdom of heaven surely would look as great as any earthly kingdom or country, or greater, if we were more taken up about the things that relate thereunto. And so might the ancient Christianity come to be restored in some measure among us, wherein (as antiquity tells us) it was so ordinary a thing when Christians did meet, presently to fall upon the matters of their religion: and it was usual in their families, even all the day long, when people were about their affairs, either in the shop or at the distaff, to mention the great things of the Christian religion, from morning to night mingling discourses of that kind with all their affairs, as they could admit of their being mingled. This was primitive Christianity, and it was in these early days that this course that I now speak of did obtain, even when such familiar interlocutions for the instruction of candidates to Christianity were carried on in their assemblies. And,

(7.) It were much to be hoped that by this means that faulty shyness would be overcome, which doth appear too generally, of discoursing at all about the things of God and the matters of religion, and what men find in their own spirits of savour and impression of such things. It is very strange and unaccountable that there should be so peculiar a shyness in reference to the matters of religion, to take discourse of them, especially as to one's own sentiments about them, what one apprehends and what one feels in himself, in one's own breast. There is not such a shyness in reference to things of any other concerns besides, as there is in reference to those concernments that relate to men's souls and their state God-ward and for eternity. Nobody is shy to speak of his own or other's ails, for the most part; nobody is shy to speak of an aching head, or an aching tooth; but what a shyness is there to speak of spiritual maladies, a bad heart, a blind mind, and the like! If discourses were in this way more frequently introduced, so as to become familiar, this shyness would be gradually overcome. We find in public assemblies it is usual to give an account of things that are of another concernment, of a most inferior concernment; as in courts of judicature, where persons of the meanest capacity are called frequently to speak their knowledge, to tell what they know about such and such a matter that doth concern *meum* and *tuum*, this or that man's right; or concerning a question depending between the government and any particular person concerning a criminal matter. Nothing more ordinary than to have persons catechised about such things as these in public assemblies, and it is not thought strange. And why should there be a particular shyness, strangeness, and aversion to give an account of things relating to the kingdom of God? As if it were a criminal thing to have one's mind engaged and taken up about matters of that nature, or as if persons were afraid to be thought guilty of religion, as if it were a dreadful thing, a thing to be dreaded to be thought guilty of minding God, and the concernments of another world. And,

(8.) It would surely be a very likely means to prevent apostacy, especially in a difficult and trying time: indeed there is continual danger of apostacy; there is much danger from daily conversation with this world, there is much danger especially in a prosperous state and condition in it, lest there should be heart apostacy, a heart secretly departing from the love of God; and there is great danger in times of persecution for religion's sake, for Christ's sake, and for the Gospel's sake. But there is nothing (in point of means and in subordination to the grace and Spirit of Christ) likely to be a better security against it, than in such a way as this, to be once thoroughly instructed in the great "principles of the oracles of God," to have them well inlaid. They that are so instructed at first are not like to be as "children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine," or entangled by the cunning craftiness of them that lie in wait to deceive. Some are withdrawn by seduction, some by persecution: there will be the same fence against both in such a way as this. "Nay," will such a one say, "I have (through the goodness of God) understood the grounds of my religion well; I did not trifle when I took up this profession;" as the apostle speaks concerning his trust in God, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him until that day." So for a Christian to say, "I know what I have believed, and I mean to abide by it through the grace of God," this will preserve him under suffering. It is a very uncomfortable thing in point of suffering to be called to suffer for that I never understood, and which I never savoured or relished. To suffer for what I never had any clear understanding of, and to suffer for what I never had any taste or relish of in my own soul, though it is possible to suffer upon such an account, yet it is uncomfortable. A man may "give his body to be burned" without love, but it is very uncomfortable so to suffer. And the one of these things is the way to the other; I am likely to savour what I understand in those things that have a real bottom, and are in themselves substantial. There are some things indeed that have so little in them, that the more I understand them the less I

shall mind them; the more I understand them the more I shall despise them; but it is not so in the great things of God, and that do relate to his kingdom. And,

(9.) It is that which will certainly be a great ornament to the Christian church, and an honour to it, when there is a succession coming up, a rising generation, of them that do understand themselves, and appear to do so, make it evident that they do understand themselves in the great things of religion; that they receive them and take them in. As it was the reproach of the Christian church (as it was still called) when that barbarous age was upon it, and so great and gross darkness and ignorance did cover the face of it, so will the contrary be its honour. And when times of greater knowledge do come, then in one sense (though these words have more meaning than that) it may be said to Zion, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," Isaiah lx. 1. Light signifies holiness too, and a prosperous state, but it signifies knowledge as that which is inchoative of all the rest. And,

(10.) Lastly. It is one of the most comfortable presages that can be, when once the spirits of those that are to be learners (as it were) in the school of Christ, come to be engaged and intent upon getting in the knowledge of Christ, and have their souls impressed thereunto. I say, it is one of the most comfortable presages of the approach of that time and that season drawing on, when one shall say to another, and even people to people, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will show us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths," Micah iv. 2. It is a comfortable pre-signification of the approach of that time when "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased:" when there shall be very much of inquiry and concern to know God and the things of God, then the time will be drawing on, when the knowledge of the Lord shall abound and cover the earth as the waters cover the seas, Isaiah xi. 9.

IV. But to make some brief use of all this. There are principles of religion, or of the oracles of God, which are needful to be taught. Then here,

1. Let us consider and adore the goodness of God towards a wicked and apostate world. How strange a sound should such a word carry with it to us, "The oracles of God!" How transporting a sound, for the oracles of God to be mentioned and spoken in such a world as ours is! when it would be thought that its so universal revolt from God, should everlastingly have cut off all intercourse between him and it, that he should never have regard for this world any more; not more than for the angels that fell and kept not their first station. Do we hear of any oracles of God sent down into those infernal regions? Oh! how great thing then is it, that there should be among us the oracles of God! Indeed, it argues very great stupidity, if there be not a mighty sense of this upon our spirits. Pagans have had the most grateful sense that could be imagined but of a mock pretence hereunto: the very notion of oracles carries a sacredness and venerableness in it; any thing that is divine, any thing that is of heavenly descent; and so such things, though but feignedly such, have been reckoned of among pagans! Oh! what veneration had those poor Ephesian idolaters for that thing (we read it *image*, but there is no such thing in the Greek) that dropped down from Jupiter! how mighty a zeal was there among that people, so as that the city is said to be a whole *neochoron*; "All Ephesus is a worshipper;" so it is expressed, as if that mighty city were but one worshipper of the great goddess Diana! So great was their zeal, so high their veneration, for a thing that their deluding priests made them believe dropped down from heaven. And we know how high their value was, of how much they did magnify themselves, for the diabolical oracles they had among them in former days before Christ's time; and how mighty a concern there was among them when these were silent at his coming. So as that some of their wisest men (Plutarch for instance) was fain to write discourse upon discourse to qualify their minds thereupon. Two treatises we read of, written by that author; one why they ceased, which he wrote in verse; the other why they did so totally cease as upon the matter they did.

And when the privilege of having the oracles of God was a more confined and limited thing, oh! how did the Jews (to whom they were so great a treasure) magnify themselves upon them, how did they glory in it! And it was acknowledged that they had a mighty advantage. "What advantage had the Jews? Much every way, chiefly as that to them were committed the oracles of God," Rom. iii. beginning. Oh! we do not enough consider the kindness of Heaven towards our world! that there should be any beams of divine light (whether by natural or supernatural revelation) shining in it. We do not enough consider that we are quite cut off from God. He doth hereby show he hath yet a desire to the work of his own hands, in that he will have his oracles known to men upon earth; as elsewhere it is said of his tabernacle, "The tabernacles of God are with men:" and in what a transport doth Solomon break forth (1 Kings viii.) in that seraphical triumph of joy, "Will God indeed dwell upon earth?" Oh! that there should be any abode of the Divine presence upon earth! And these are some of the most expressive tokens of such a visible presence vouchsafed; his placing these oracles among us, and diffusing the most impressive light that reveals him, and that reveals the great things that relate to his kingdom. And,

2. We may collect hence, that it is a very apt method, and accommodated unto intelligent creatures, that God doth make use of, in conveying to them the necessary knowledge of the doctrine of Christ; for there are principles that are to be begun with; (first principles as you see;) you had need to be taught which are the first principles of the oracles of God. There are the oracles of God, there are principles of these oracles, and the first of those principles. God doth apply himself to us suitable to our nature, he aims to draw us by the "cords of a man and by the bands of love," to make reason and love engineers by which he would take hold of us, sanctify the one principle and the other, that we may be brought nigh to him and held in with him.

And it ought deeply to be considered, that there are (as you see) principles wherewith we are to begin, and by which we are to be led on (as the apostle's expression here is) towards perfection. Principles of truth, principles of doctrine, such as a "form of sound words," wholesome words may be expressive of. Though (by the way) I am against being tied to a form of words; in matters of this nature I would have words used for helps, not for bonds. And if I were to inquire how any have profited in the things of God, even in this very respect; in respect of their knowledge relating thereto, if they could express a sound and good understanding about these things, in their own words, in words of their own choosing, and not which they found in this or that book, I should like it a great deal better. It would argue them so much the more understanding and knowing Christians, and likely to prove more stable ones. As I said before, I would have you to make use of other men's words (as you may any good book you read or sermon you hear) for helps, but not for bonds; to help your understandings, not to limit them. Again,

3. This lets us see the presumptuous and preposterous rashness of such persons as do at random, at all adventures, take up the Christian profession, when they never as yet understood the principles of Christianity, and so they really profess they know not what; as if the name Christian were a name of nothing, a name that had no signification, a name that did import no real thing. Those that can give no account of their knowledge of principles, and yet will be Christians, call themselves Christians, what a usurpation is this! How groundlessly and presumptuously do they usurp a glorious name! a title that carries with it a great deal of glory! and I would have you understand it so. A Christian is a glorious title, and they will be made to understand it to be so another day, who have usurped it they know not why, who have profaned it, and could never justify the pretence. It is a far greater presumption than for any man to call himself king or emperor, who is a mean peasant, an ordinary fellow, and can have no such pretence. "I will bring them to worship at thy feet (it is spoken to the Philadelphian church, Rev. iii. 9.) who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie." For a man to take up a profession that is a mere lie, what a presumption

s it! a man to call himself a Christian! But he lies, and must do so upon one account, if he live in the continual iolation of the Christian precepts, and upon another, if e understand nothing of the Christian principles. It is a ie; it is to suppose that *Christian* is a name without a neaning, a name that means nothing. And,

4. We may collect hence, that it is very stupid folly for nen to live all their days under this profession, without ver concerning themselves to understand the principles of Christianity. It is very presumptuous rashness to take up hat profession, when a man will commence Christian all f a sudden without ever having understood its principles. But it is far more stupid folly if a man will, all his days, ive under the Christian profession in continued ignorance f the principles of the Christian religion. How ridiculous oth that man make himself that will all his time go under he name of a merchant, and yet never understand any hing of merchandise! or if a man will be called a philoopher, when every one that knows him, knows that he nderstands not any of the principles of philosophy! But,

5. It is of so great importance to understand well the rinciples of Christian religion, that they need to be taught. s there so great weight laid upon the teaching of them? re they hereby represented to us to be matters of absolute ecessity? then by the importance of the principles judge f the excellency of the end of the Christian religion. And o consider, Hath God thus brought it about that we should e all of us in one degree or other under the Ghristian institution? What is it for? That which hath so very imortant principles must have a proportionable end. Then et us see what that is. Religion is a thing that terminates pon eternity, that runs into another world: they therefore hat are under the Christian institution (as we all are to be n the church of God while we are here in the world) are o look upon themselves as so many candidates for the lessed eternity. Here in this world we are training up or heaven, for everlasting glory; and hereupon are the rinciples of religion, of the oracles of God, represented s the most important things, that have their final and deerminate reference to another world, the glories of the eavenly and eternal state. This were a great thought for s to carry about with us, whensoever we are under Gosel teaching, to think that God hath provided and taken are that I should be trained up for heaven and fitted for he eternal kingdom, and for an everlasting abode in that lessed glorious state. And when you are training up your hild, oh! how great a thing is it to be training it up in the nowledge of God! for there are some steps that must be aken with it, to make it meet for partaking "of the inheitance of the saints in light." You know there is great are taken about the education of great heirs. The very hildren of the church are God's children. He calls them o, (Ezekiel xvi. 20, 21.) "Is this a small matter that thou ast slain my children?" speaking of Jewish parents makng their children pass through the fire to Moloch. In the egenerate state of that church and people, he calls them is children. Now I say, great care is wont to be taken in ie education of great heirs. Those that are the children f God and are really so, if children they are also heirs; nd they are begotten to a lively hope, to an inheritance hat is incorruptible and undefiled. And they are, by "the incere milk of the word" which they receive from time time, to grow up to a fitness and capacity to partake of hat inheritance. We should never think of the principles f the Christian religion, but it should put us in mind of ie end of it, and what it refers to. And yet again,

6. We may further learn from hence, that since there is ich need that such principles should be taught, men should ike heed of neglecting, and much more of opposing, any t methods wherein they may be taught. And why do ey so? Why, they think themselves too wise to learn, ey understand too much already to need being taught. ut while they account themselves so very wise, see how ie Spirit of God counts them, what notion they pass uner with him; "Fools despise instruction," Prov. i. 7. nd that is certainly a very ill character, that the contempt f instruction brings upon persons: they think themselves ise, and God thinks them fools; and certainly his judgent is the most discerning and true: and as it draws on bad character, so it is very likely to draw on a bad end and issue. To hate instruction is to hate knowledge; and he is said to love knowledge that loves instruction, Prov. xii. 1. But to be brought in under the notion of a hater of knowledge, divine knowledge, oh! how dreadful a thing is that! "They shall call but I will not answer, they shall seek me early but they shall not find me." Why, what is the matter? what is all that resolved into which you read to that purpose in the 1st chapter of Proverbs? Why in the 29th verse it is said, Because they hated knowledge and would not choose the fear of the Lord; therefore he would be deaf to all their cries and importunities, when destruction was coming upon them as a whirlwind. Why is God so inexorable towards them? Because they hated knowledge, they would not endeavour to learn. And,

7. Lastly, If there be so absolute a necessity of being taught such principles of religion, or such "Oracles of God," there surely ought to be a very peculiar temper and disposition of spirit in order to learning. And that I would have you to take an account of in a few heads which I shall only name. We are all to be learners here in this world, we must learn as long as we live. And if it be of so absolute necessity that we learn such things, we should,

(1.) Apply ourselves to them with very great reverence, for they are "the oracles of God" that we have to do with; it is something sacred and divine, that we are conversant and taken up about. When any thing of these oracles was to be first given in writing, though it was but a little, to a peculiar and select people of his, we see what an awful business was made of it. God comes down; manifests his glorious presence in the mountain that he had selected for that purpose; the people are there assembled and cast about the foot of the mountain; the mountain is enclosed, and they are forbidden, on pain of death, to approach the borders; "Touch not the borders; for whosoever toucheth them shall die," Exod. xix. 20, 21. In that assembly of that people, on purpose to hear the divine oracles that were to be preached among them, there was a glorious revelation that came from heaven. And do we think the Gospel revelation that we have is less glorious? No, saith the apostle, "The glory wherewith the law was given upon mount Sinai, was no glory in comparison with this glory that so much excels." Oh! we should be learners with the greatest reverence imaginable, as having from time to time the divine oracles to be opened among us. Here is the most glorious appearance of God. When there was comparatively an unspeakably less appearance even than that on mount Sinai, that is, when some of the Divine glory shone in one bush, it is charged upon Moses (to strike his mind with a due awe) presently to put off his shoes. This was to be significant to us, with what great and profound reverence we are to have our souls impressed and possessed upon an appearance of God; and these are the brightest and most glorious appearances, in the kind, that we know above any besides.

(2.) We should apply ourselves to learn the things of the kingdom of God with very deep humility; with a most humble sense of our own ignorance, and that we know so little. "He that thinks he knows any thing, knows nothing as he ought to know," saith the apostle. And nothing was a more ignominious brand upon a sort of men that did start up early in the Christian church, that affected to be called by the name of gnostic, than that they so much valued themselves upon that knowledge to which they pretended, and but pretended; as that name did signify. Whether they were so soon called by that name, as some imagine, is a matter of doubt, but the genius and spirit of the men undoubtedly appeared early; and many passages in the epistles of the apostles have a direct reference thereunto, as particularly that, (1 Cor. viii. 2.) "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth." But (I say) it was the ignominy and reproach of that sort of men, that they did so highly glory in an airy kind of knowledge, that they were never the better for, nay, that made them undoubtedly upon the whole matter much worse men: it doth always so where there is not great humility, which doth accompany and go with knowledge. That is, they who are learners, ought to consider themselves as such, as we must all of us always be while we are here in this world, such as "know but in part." Here we are to have very self-diminishing thoughts of our own knowledge. Surely it is but

little that we know, as we find Agur speaks concerning himself; "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man." And so the Psalmist speaks of himself, (Psal. lxxiii.) "So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." Such diminishing thoughts it becomes us to have of ourselves, as to look upon ourselves under such a self-despising notion, (as I may so speak,) that while we are here we are but in a state of learners, and must be so as long as we are in this earthly state. But then,

(3.) We should be learners still with fervent desire of learning more and more; and this agrees well with an humble sense of our yet knowing so very little. It hath always been mentioned concerning one eminent heathen, as an honourable character he went under, that he was known by that motto, "*Hoc tantum scio, me nihil scire:*" *this only I know, that I know nothing:* though he was one of the greatest and most learned men of his age. If there be a sincere desire of increasing knowledge, nothing better agrees with it than such a sense as this, Alas! it is little I know, and I am to be still aiming to know more and more, in reference to things wherein I am so much concerned. "I opened my mouth and panted," saith the Psalmist, "for I longed for thy commandments," Psal. cxix. 131. We are to be continually desiring that which is to be the means of our growth in knowledge. "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby:" and these principles are called "milk," as you see in the close of this 5th chap. of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the text is.

(4.) It ought to be with a continued pleasant savour and relish of divine knowledge, that we should be driving the design to increase; to increase and grow in it. "Grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" labour to have a continual intermixture of grace with knowledge that may give it a pleasant savour. There is very little delight in dry notions that never influence a man's heart. "When wisdom enters into the heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto the soul," (saith the wise man,) "then understanding shall preserve thee, discretion shall lead thee." Knowledge doth its office effectually, to guide and lead us in our way, when once it becomes of a grateful taste and relish to our souls; if it be taken and digested, and we relish a sweetness and pleasantness in it, then it will have power to do its work, that is, to be our guide and director in our way and course, as you have it, Prov. ii. 10. And then,

(5.) It ought to be with continual gratitude, adoring and blessing God that he makes any of his light to shine in this dark world; especially that it should shine to any of us; that we have this "sure word of prophecy" put into our hands that makes up the "Oracles of God" in an eminent sense; "till the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts." And,

(6.) Lastly, It must be (or else we do nothing) with a serious design of getting a holy impression in our hearts by the truth we know, or else all is lost. There are too many, (the Lord knows,) that if they take pleasure in knowing, and increasing knowledge, they do yet know but for the knowledge' sake, and aim no further. It is a fine thing to know much, to understand more than one's neighbour, more than such and such; and so be able superciliously to look down upon them as comparatively very ignorant. But to know on purpose that I may be accordingly and do accordingly, is the true end of Christian knowledge. "I desire to know more that I may have a better heart, and that I may be able to love God more; that I may be more like God, more fitted to serve him, and walk with him in this world and enjoy him in the next:" if this be not the design we drive at, in aiming to know, in all our desire of knowing much of the things of God and Christian religion, we do but labour for the wind, and shall at length reap the whirlwind. In what a transport is the apostle (in that Phil. iii.) in the thoughts and estimates that he expresseth there of the knowledge of Christ, "I count all things loss and dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord!" Well, but what sort of knowledge was it he aimed at? See what it was in what follows, such a knowledge as by which he might be transformed into his likeness, whereby he might be conformable to his death and to his resurrection, such a knowledge as to have the image impressed by it of a crucified and glorified Jesus. And no other knowledge would serve his turn, "I count all things but loss and dross and dung in comparison of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord," so to "know him" as to "be found in him," as to have "the fellowship of his sufferings and the power of his death," and to attain with him the resurrection from the dead.

And I desire in the close of this discourse to leave this with you. It is a dreadful thing to trifle with sacred matters. If at any time we open this book, or any thing out of it be opened to us, and we have not that serious design before our eyes and upon our hearts, that we would know more of divine things, that we may be made more like God, and be more fitted for his service and communion both here and hereafter, we shall be found guilty of trifling with that which is sacred: and though in this world the punishment may not be so visibly severe, yet the guilt is undoubtedly great with (and indeed incomparably greater than) what Uzzah lay under when he rashly laid hold on the ark, and the Bethshemites, when they opened and would be curiously prying into it. And what, do we therefore make light of God, and the sacred things of God, because in the Gospel days there are not so terrible examples set in view before our eyes? But if we look into the great mysteries of the Divine kingdom, with a slight mind and a vain heart, without any serious design of the same thing that these discoveries, these truths, these doctrines that are brought to our knowledge are designed for, we are all the while deserving that, which will be worse in the issue and end, than to have the name put upon the place "*Perez-Uzzah, the breach that Uzzah made,*" and it will be a more dreadful thing than if he did signalize the place by a terrible stroke from heaven upon us. When a man meddleth with the great things of God, and can give no account for what, but only to satisfy his own curiosity, and the idle fancy of a vain mind; this will have the sad issue. But let it be for this, and my heart bear me record that it is for this, that I may become a serious, holy, knowing Christian, a useful Christian; that I may live up to Christianity through the whole of my course while I am here upon earth, and then shall I be fitted at length for the heavenly inheritance with the saints in light, who shall possess that glorious inheritance.

Our next great work will be to fall upon the first principle, the very first of these principles, that which is the principal of principles; and that is concerning the Deity; the deepest foundation of all our religion.

LECTURE III.*

Romans i. 20.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

Our business (as we have proposed, you know) is, with God's gracious assistance, to open to you the principles of religion. Christian religion (which we finally intend) is founded in natural; and the principles of the former must be understood, therefore, to comprehend the latter, as things at least necessarily pre-supposed unto the doctrine of Christ. Now it being our design, in the general, to open to you the principles that do any way belong to that doctrine, we chose (as it is most fit) to begin with Him who is the beginning of all, the principle that is most firstly first, *primo primum*, as they use to speak. Such is the Deity, whether we speak of principles of being or of knowledge; for there is no being that depends not upon the Divine

* Preached December 5th, 1699.—The preceding discourse was, doubtless, preached in two Lectures, but the division, and the time when the second was delivered, are not noticed in the manuscript. Edit.

Being, and no knowledge, rightly so called, which some way or other depends not upon divine knowledge. He is not only the first being, but the first and primary known, he *primum esse* and the *primum cognoscibile*, as he is justly to be reckoned.

Now this text shows us the true method of arriving to the knowledge of him, the unmade Being, by the things that are made; and not only to the certainty of his existence, but of the excellency of his nature; both discoverable by the same light, by the same evidencing mediums, which that you may see, let us view the contents of this text briefly. We have in it,

First, What is revealed concerning God, expressed *first* of all more indefinitely, "the invisible things of him." This must not be understood distinctively, as if some things of God were visible and some invisible; that is, of things belonging to the Divine nature; but it must be understood adversatively, that is, though they are invisible, and notwithstanding their invisibility, they are yet clearly demonstrable by the things that are made. And then, *secondly*, they are declared to us more expressly, first, in one great instance of his eternal power, the effects whereof we see (as is here said) in the things that are made. But the cause itself is still invisible. And this is most fitly instanced in reference to the creature and the creation, which is said to be demonstrative thereof. All this vast creation, with that great variety of creatures that do compose and make it up, having lain in that, as in the pregnant womb thereof, from all eternity; out of which it is at length produced by it as its mighty creative cause. And then, secondly, besides this instance of one peculiar excellency of the Divine Being, (his eternal power,) to save a long and a particular enumeration, all the rest of the divine excellencies are summed up in that one expression, "Godhead:" his eternal power and Godhead, comprehending all his other excellencies and perfections besides. This is the first thing we have to note to you from the text—what is revealed concerning God, even the invisible things of him, particularly his eternal power, the immediate cause of all things, and his Godhead, which comprehends all his excellencies together. And,

Secondly, We have to consider here the revelation thereof, these things "are clearly seen," seen, and *clearly* seen. This indeed looks like a riddle; invisible things seen! and clearly seen! things are seen that are invisible, yet that cannot be seen! But the next words solve it, "being understood by the things that are made." Seen! How are they seen? Not occularly, but intellectually; they are seen as being understood. They are seen by the eye of the mind, though they cannot be seen by the bodily eye. God, and every thing belonging to the nature of God, being in that respect by the excellency thereof invisible. But it may be said, How are they so seen and clearly seen by the minds and understandings of men? when the complaint is concerning men generally, even in the very context, "their foolish hearts are darkened," and "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not;" as it is in the beginning of John's Gospel. How then are they intellectually seen? Why nothing is more usual than to express a matter of right (where that right is most evident) by matter of fact, and by such forms of speech as signify the fact. "No man liveth to himself;" that is, no man should. It is so plain a case that no man should live to himself, that when the design is to speak the reason of the thing, this is the expression of it, "no man liveth to himself," that is, is allowed to do so; and indeed in common language it is usual to express the passive future by the present or the preterit, as we say, *vir spectatus*, for *vir spectabilis*, or *spectandus; one that is very much regarded*, for one that *ought to be or deserves to be so*. And a thing that we say is *indubitate fidei*, of *undoubted* faith and certainty; we mean by it *indubitante*, that *ought not* to be doubted, or that there is no reason why it should be doubted. So "clearly seen" here, is clearly to be seen and understood, that is, such as might be understood, that ought to be understood, and there is no reason why they are not understood, but because men will not understand; shut their eyes and are willingly blind and ignorant, "not liking" (as it is afterwards expressed in the context) "to retain God in their knowledge." Or, there are here things so clearly to be understood, that they are manifestly left (as the close of this verse is) without all excuse who understand them not. And upon that account, in the words presently following, "that which may be known," (so we read it,) the expression is, that which *is* known of God; but the meaning is, that which may be known of God, as we translate it. Then,

Thirdly, We are to consider the evidencing medium in the text, "by the things that are made;" the made things that are visible, are clearly demonstrative of their unmade Cause, of the excellency of the power and Godhead of that invisible Being who is the unmade Maker of them. And,

Fourthly, You have the constancy and continuedness of this concealment and revelation, "from the creation of the world." It is not ἐκ, *out of*, but ἀπὸ, *from;* and notes the term of time and not casualty, which is expressed in the other phrase of speech we noted to you before, "the things that are made." But all along, ever since the world began, ever since there was a world in being, the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, they have been concealed and revealed; concealed in one respect, that is, they have been invisible to mortal eyes; and revealed in another respect, that is, have been visible to mortal minds. And then you have,

Fifthly, In the last place, (which will be fit to be considered as the use of all,) the inexcusableness of those that receive not this revelation; so that they are without excuse, that do not acknowledge and adore the invisible Godhead, so demonstrating himself by the things that are made.

As to what we intend, you may take the ground of the whole discourse from this scripture thus.

That the sundry excellencies of the Divine Being, all-comprehending Godhead, are clearly demonstrable by the things that are made. And you may take in (as that which gives the greater lustre to the truth) that which is put adversatively, if you please, notwithstanding their invisibility in themselves.

In speaking to this, these two things are principally to be insisted on:

I. They show you what the Godhead comprehends, as far as is needful or possible unto us, or what are the excellencies that belong to the nature of God. And then,

II. To show how these are demonstrable of him by the things that are made.

I shall not dispute the reasonableness of that method in speaking to other subjects, first to inquire about the *an sit*, and then about the *quod sit*, or rather the *quid sit;* to inquire first whether such a thing be, and then to inquire what it is. There may, indeed, as to some confused knowledge of a thing, be an inquiry concerning its existence, and afterwards a descent made to inquire more particularly into its precise nature. But simply speaking, it would be the most absurd thing in the world to inquire first whether this or that be, before there is any apprehension at all what it is; for then we inquire about a shadow; and neither he that demonstrates, nor he to whom the demonstration is made, can do other than beat the air; the one understands not himself, nor can the other understand what he goes about. But it would be much more absurd in this case, to follow such a method as that, because, by universal consent, the Divine nature includes existence in it, which some therefore rely upon as sufficient demonstration of the existence of God, that is, that his very idea doth include existence, so that it is impossible to conceive of the Divine Being, but we must conceive of it as existing, inasmuch as the very idea and notion of it is inclusive of all perfections, whereof existence cannot be but one, and a very fundamental one, too, to all the rest. And therefore it must be a manifest contradiction, so much as but to suppose, that the most perfect Being must not exist, because a possibility of not existing is a very great and manifest imperfection.

But that is not the method of demonstration which I choose, but that which the text lays before us, that is, to demonstrate by that which is made, both the certainty of God's existence, and the excellency of his nature. But the latter we must have some understanding of first, otherwise neither do I nor you know what we are doing, if we have no apprehension among us, who or what a one he is, whose existence we speak of.

I. This therefore comes to be considered and inquired into, what excellencies we must suppose the Godhead or Divine nature (which is all one) doth comprehend. And here it must be acknowledged, we enter into a vast and most profound abyss; and you and I have all of us great reason to apprehend our need of much forgiveness, that after so great opportunity as we have had to learn better, we understand and know little yet of what we are to speak and hear of; and we have great need to supplicate and look up, that we may be enabled to speak and hear worthily concerning the blessed and eternal God, and to speak things of him fit to be spoken, and to hear them as it is fit to hear such things.

Why, in general it is certain the name of God doth import a being absolutely perfect, a Being comprehensive of all perfections.

And now here it may be said, This throws us into a sort of despair; for certainly a Being comprehensive of all perfections, must be to us altogether incomprehensible; we can never comprehend what doth itself comprehend all things.

I answer, Very true indeed: and yet there is a knowledge of this incomprehensible and all-comprehending Being, which is necessary as our first step, not only in what we are now about, but in reference to whatsoever else we have to go about to do, or to enjoy in all time, or in all eternity. But to relieve our thoughts here a little, you must know that we are not to treat of this incomprehensible and all-comprehending Being, in the way of metaphysicians and philosophers, who must have notions of things, ideas of them, (it is that which they profess and pretend to,) adequate to the things themselves whereof they treat; but our business is to speak of this ever-blessed Being as persons professing religion; not as philosophers, but as religionists; and so we are to consider him as the object of our religion, the first thing to be considered in all religion; and so the name of our inquiry comes to this, Have we an object for our religion, yea or no? And if we cannot reach to comprehend (as it is impossible we should) all that doth belong to the Godhead, if yet we can reach to apprehend so much as will represent and recommend him to us, as a worthy, deserving object of our religion, our business is done: that is what we design, and we may know so much concerning him as to know him to be a fit object, or worthy of religion, without knowing all of him, which is impossible; and if it were possible it would undeify him. He could not be God if we could comprehend him. He could not be a Deity if a finite mind were comprehensive of him.

And that you may a little understand the reasonableness of what I now say, do but consider what knowledge of man it is necessary for you to have in order to your conversing with men. Is it not possible for one man to converse with another, without having a full and entire knowledge of the full and entire guidity (as I may so speak) of human nature? must a man know all the properties and attributes of human nature, or he cannot converse with men? I hope there are many men converse one with another besides philosophers. And so, I say, it is equally possible for you to converse with God, without knowing every thing belonging to his nature. It is enough in order hereunto, and that so you may be in a possibility of conversing with him by religion, as the great object of your religion: the only object of your religion, that you know him to be more perfect than any thing else, or all things else, though you do not fully know how excellent or perfect he is, or ever can. But this our conception of him in the general, that he is a Being absolutely perfect, or universally perfect, must comprehend all that can be thought, and all that can be said, concerning him. Yet, in the mean time, this is too general to denote to us the object of our religion. We must have more particular and more distinct thoughts of him whom we are to worship, to whom we are to pay all duty, and from whom we are to expect all felicity, than only this one general notion doth furnish us with. That is, that he is one that is universally or absolutely perfect; we must necessarily descend and come down to particulars; and think what particulars are necessary to constitute and make up for us the object of our worship and religion. And so you may take this more particular (though yet short) account.

When we inquire, What doth the idea or notion of God include? what are we to conceive of the nature of God, as he is the object of our religion? we must have such a representation of him as this in our minds; that he is an eternal, self-subsisting Being, himself unmade, and the intelligent and free Author and Original of every thing that is made. Conceive him so, and you have before you the object of your worship, the object of religion, one that claims by a natural right that you fall down and adore him. This is some answer to the former of these inquiries,—What we are to conceive by that name of God as represented and held forth to us under that name, or what is it that the Godhead doth comprehend, so far as is answerable to our purpose, that is, of stating before you an object of religion.

II. And now the second thing we have to do, is to demonstrate all this concerning God, by the things that are made: which is that method of demonstration that the text furnishes us with, and directs us unto. If such a Being as this doth exist in reality, have actual existence in such a being, or he doth exist such and as such, then we can be in no further doubt, whether we have an object of worship, an object of religion, yea or no. But now the demonstration of the existence of such a Being, by things that are made, must be done by parts, according as there are parts that this representation of the object of religion is made up of; and so we shall proceed gradually part by part. As,

1. We have this to demonstrate to you, that there is existing an ETERNAL BEING, that was of itself, depending upon nothing for its being or existence; and this we have to demonstrate to you by the things that are made; that is thus: though that eternal Being is invisible; you see him not with your eyes; it is a being of too high an excellency ever to be seen of mortal eyes, or by the eyes of the flesh, or by external sense; yet there are things in being that are visible, and of the existence whereof you can be sure. You are sure that yourselves are, and that you are some of the things that are made; for you very well know, that you began to be, that you have not been always, and that you have been but a little while: then, I say, from that which you may be sure of, that it is a being, you may be likewise sure, there is an eternal Being that was from everlasting of itself. And I would not have you herein to debase your own minds and understandings, as if they could not be at a certainty about such a thing as this, though the matter falls not under the sight of the eye. As to what is to be inferred, to be collected and concluded, it would be too great a debasement of human nature, and the mind and spirit of a man, to suppose or imagine that this mind and spirit cannot be as certain of its object, as external sense can be of its object. You think you are very sure of what you see with your eyes, and you have reason to think you are so: and you are so. But I would have you to apprehend too, that you may be as sure of something that you only know with your mind as you can be of any thing that you see with your eyes: and you wrong your own understandings if you will not think the one sort of things to be as certain as the other sort. You think (for instance) we are all very sure that we see one another, and are here present together at this time: you see me and I see you. No man but will think this a very absolute certainty of what falls under sight. But let me appeal to you now, whether you cannot be certain of something that only falls under the view of your mind, and not under your sight at all. Are you not as sure that two and two make four, as you are that you and I see one another? the one as an object of the mind only, the other as an object of sense. And pray is not the one of these as certain as the other? Am I not as certain that two and two make four, as that we see one another? Have you not as much satisfaction of the truth of the one as of the truth of the other? Well, that being now laid, I doubt not but if you will use your understandings, you will see and confess that you are as certain, that an eternal Being is, which you see not, as you are that any being is, that you do see.

Why! how can we be as certain? you will say.

Why, plainly and shortly thus, from this consequence, If any thing is, something hath always been. Do but consider and weigh in your own minds the clearness of this

consequence. If you can be sure that something now is, you may be as sure that something hath ever been, been from eternity, or (which is all one) that there is an eternal Being. Well, but how will this consequence be made out? Why, plainly, by taking the reverse of it. Do but suppose with yourselves nothing more is; then the manifest consequence will be, that to eternity nothing can ever be, and of this (if you will think) you may be as sure, as you can of this, that two and two make four. That is, do but lay down this, and suppose it: there is nothing now in being no where, or any where; whatsoever there was, there is now nothing of one sort or another in being; you then may be sure, that to all eternity nothing can ever happen to be: for nothing can spring or start up out of nothing *into* being of itself. Can you be surer of any thing than of this, that if you could suppose the whole universe of being not to be, or that from eternity it was not, to all eternity it would never be, it could never be. Then how plain a consequence is this, if something now is, something hath always been; if there be any being, there is an eternal Being. For if there had been any time, or any moment, in all conceivable eternity, wherein there was nothing in being, nothing had ever come into being, or could possibly have done so. This then is the first step, there is an ETERNAL BEING, and nothing can be plainer. But now,

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LECTURE IV.*

2. WE come in the next place to prove to you the *self-existence* of such a Being. There is such a Being first, and now secondly, that eternal Being must be of itself, could no other way be, but of and from itself. Now here you must conjoin these two things in your own thoughts, that so (as you will see in the sequel) every thing that is thus proved, may be found to be proved of one and the same being. Now then it is evident, that this eternal Being is the first of all beings, there can be nothing before it, and therefore it cannot have its existence from another, there being nothing before it, from whence it could have its existence, and therefore it must have its existence from itself; not by once beginning to exist, for we have shown already, it is impossible, that if there were nothing in being, any thing should of itself rise up out of nothing into being. And therefore this is such a Being, as must be understood by the excellency of its own nature, to have been always in being without beginning, and so it will appear to be an eternal Being and to be a self-existing Being both at once; or (which is all one) a necessary Being, a Being that doth not depend upon will and pleasure, as all made things do. All made things depend upon will and pleasure; "for thy pleasure they are, and were created. But the unmade Being must needs be self-existent, no way depending upon the pleasure of another, there being nothing before it, and so (which is the same thing) itself necessarily existing, as that excellency, that peculiar excellency of its own nature, to which it was simply repugnant not to exist. And so for the same reason, if there have been an eternal self-subsisting Being, there must be still an eternal self-subsisting Being, for it is upon these terms, and for that reason, for which it was impossible to it ever not to be. And so that nature which he is pleased to assume to himself is most admirably expressive of this peculiarity of his nature, "I AM THAT I AM," or simply "I AM," Exod. iii. 14. All beings besides being but (as it were) shadows of being in comparison of this. And

3. We are further to conceive and to prove concerning this Being, its causation of all things else: this is an attribute of the Divine Being, as it is itself without cause, so to be the Cause of every thing. Itself unmade, but the Maker of all things that are made. A thing the blessed God doth justly and often glory in, in sundry parts of Scripture: "The Maker of heaven and earth." The first as well as the last. He of whom and from whom all things are; and we are told again and again how, in the beginning of Genesis and the beginning of the Gospel of John, and elsewhere, to wit, by a word's speaking. He spake and they were made. He commanded and they stood forth. That there are made things is a proof to us that he was their Maker. A made thing and a maker are relatives one to another, and there can be no maker of that which was of itself. Whence should that which was made not of itself come, but from that being that was of itself?

4. We must conceive and may clearly prove from what is made, the vast *power* of the Eternal Being. The things that are made prove that he is a Being of the greatest conceivable power, the greatest that we can conceive, and indeed unspeakably greater than we can conceive. This appears in that, first, he hath made all things out of nothing: as nothing can of itself arise out of nothing, so it is the greatest power that is conceivable to bring any thing out of nothing: if all the contrivances and all the power of this world were put together to bring the least thing out of nothing, you would easily apprehend it impossible to all. If all the force that is in the whole earth, and even in the whole creation, should be exerted together to bring a grain of sand out of nothing, you would easily apprehend it would never be, and therefore how vast is that power of this Eternal Being! he to whom the eternal Godhead belongs, (as the text speaks,) to bring things into being that were not; that were nothing immediately before. But then, secondly, consider also the vastness of the creation. To bring the least thing out of nothing must require the greatest power, but to bring so great a creation as this out of nothing, is that which doth render the power of the Creator both perspicuous and admirable at once. To have such a frame of things as we behold with our eyes from day to day made to rise up out of nothing, and only by a word speaking, how perspicuous and admirable doth it evidence his infinite power! But,

5. We are to apprehend and may prove, the admirable *beneficence* of him that made them. If we cast our eye through the universe, and consider, that the first order of creatures that have life are made capable of pleasure; some kind of satisfaction to themselves, that is, that are capable of the meaner life, the sensitive life; and that the creatures beneath them are made to afford the matter of that pleasure; when it was very easily possible for a Being of vast, immense power to have made creatures only for self-torment; upon this account it appears that the whole earth, the whole creation, is full of his goodness. So that rising a little from the meanest sort and order of creatures, you immediately ascend to such a sort and order of creatures as hath, every one, its suitable delectation. That all the repasts of that life that are given to the several orders of creatures, are mingled and sweetened with so much delight, speaks all to be full of his goodness. Whatsoever is necessary for the support of it, is generally taken in with delight and complacency. If this Being who is the Author and Spring of all other beings, were not a being of admirable goodness and beneficence, it had been as easy a thing to him, that what should have been necessary for the support of inferior beings should always have been accompanied with torture as well as pleasure. That whereas we and the creatures beneath us find it needful in order to the support of life to eat and drink, he might have ordered it so that there never should have been eating and drinking without torment: now we find it is with continued pleasure, for the greater part, with all sorts of creatures whose case doth require it. And again,

6. We must understand from the things that are made, this Eternal Being to have been their *intelligent* and *designing* Maker. We are to prove this intellectuality from the things that are made; that he is an intellectual Being, that he did not give rise to this creation by an effort of vast and resistless power alone; but by a power that was guided and governed by wisdom, so as to know and design all his work throughout. And (as I have told you) it being our business in speaking to this head, to evince and make out to you an object of religion, to give you a plain and satisfactory answer to this first question, Have we an object of religion, yea or no? this is most absolutely necessary to the resolution of it. We have not an object of religion without this, that is, without the supposition of an intellectual designing Maker of all things. If we should suppose

* Preached Dec. 12th, 1690.

only an Almighty Maker of things, who made them without wisdom, without design, intending no such thing; if the effort of such a power as we could not resist, and it could not of itself withhold, had thrown up such a creation as this is, out of nothing into what it is, if that had been possible, here had been no object of worship, no object of religion, that is, there would have been nothing that would either deserve or could receive religious homage from us: nothing that could deserve it, because the thing was altogether (upon this supposition) without design. If a mighty violent storm had thrown in upon the coast some vessel full of rich treasure, and I was passing by it, and (it being without an owner, no one laying claim to it) it were thrown into my lap, would I fall down and worship the storm? though I might him that guided and directed it. Nor indeed as an undesigning cause of all things could not deserve religious homage, so neither could he receive it. It would be an absurd thing to pay a religious homage where there could be no reception of it, where no notice could be taken of it. But nothing is more evident from the things that are made, than that the Maker of them hath done all with most profound and wise counsel; he hath therein displayed an infinite understanding, and thereby made known that his understanding is infinite. By wisdom are the heavens stretched forth and the earth established and founded. Which appears several ways:

(1.) In the order which is every way observable in the creation of God. Wisdom only is the parent of order, and order the product of wisdom. It cannot be, that there should be accurate and continued order by chance. When the letters of the alphabet are put into such an order as to express such and such sense; will any man say this was by chance, and this was without design? especially when this is continued, when they are repeated over and over again, in such order as to make a volume; the very thing (I remember) that the pagan Cicero takes notice of and urgeth for the proving of a Deity, the creating of the world by a wise and designing cause, against the Epicureans, who would have it arise only out of the fortuitous jumble of several particles of matter, called atoms. "You might as well (saith he) suppose that the letters of the alphabet in great numbers shaken together in confusion, and thrown out, should fall into the order of Ennius's poems, so as of themselves without design to compose such a history as his, all in verse." When we consider the order that is between things and things, how exact a course and motion the sun, moon, and planets, and other stars, do hold, so as that a man of weak understanding can tell you at what hour, in such a month and in such a day of the month, the sun will rise and set, and so of the moon; and so (those that do observe them) of the planets, and other stars besides; and then to see the constant succession of summer and winter, spring and autumn, day and night, amongst us: whence comes all this order? What! from no designing cause? And again,

(2.) Consider the aptitude of things to their end, the several ends they are appointed to serve for; as, who can comprehend that such a thing as our eye was made for any thing else but to see with, and our foot but to walk with, and our hand but to work with, and such a thing as the ear was made for any thing else but to hear with? Who can comprehend that there should be that strange and exact aptitude in every thing for the ends and purposes that they do serve for, without a design that they should serve those purposes? And this would be a great deal more convictive, if it were so obvious to every one to take notice of and observe many things that are more latent, and lie out of common view: to think how the several veins and arteries do receive and distribute and return back again the blood from its fountain, the heart, so as continually to renew strength and vigour in the body, as the matter doth require: to think of the admirable variety and suitableness of those things that we have in our bodies, called muscles, and all the several sorts of motion that are to be performed; about six (as is observed) belonging to the eye itself, without which it were impossible it should move in the several ways it doth: and about four hundred and thirty of these in one human body. If any man did by chance see a watch, who had never seen one before; but he finds upon observation, what uses and purposes it serves for in the general, and what purposes the several parts it was composed of do serve for, in order to that general end; will he not with the greatest confidence imaginable pronounce, "this was made with a design?" or would a man blame him for his confidence? Or if a man take upon him to pretend to such an excessive measure of wit as to say, "these things serve to such a purpose, for this general end, the measuring of time: and the several parts serve for several ends, this and that motion by which the whole is made useful to that common end; but this was never made by any human art or with a design, but the several parts of which it is composed being agitated variously by the wind, or motion of the air, were thrown by mere chance into this figure, and so there resulted out of the whole such a little engine as this, that now you see serves these purposes;" who would not think that man, with his pretences to wit, a madman that should give such an account as this, how a watch came to be made, when he sees what it serves for, and what its several parts do serve for, in subserviency and reference to the common end? And which way would you judge and pronounce with confidence that such a thing was made with a design, but by having so manifest characters upon it of a designing cause? so as that every one but a madman would presently say, this was done with a design and for such a purpose. But there is no one that hath given himself but to look a little into the composition of a human body, but could see a hundred times more curiosity in so many hundred of things that go to the composition of it. As I have told you, in each several muscle of a human body there is as much curiosity as can be taken notice of in a watch, and much more in the fabric and structure of the eye and of the ear. So that nothing can be imagined a greater absurdity than to suppose such things as those that we see are made, were made without design, or otherwise than with design, and by a wise cause that was first productive of them, and continues to be productive of them in the stated way that he hath set for them. And,

(3.) We may conclude an intellectual designing cause of the things that are made, from very many of the things themselves, that not only have characters of a design upon them, and so thence appear to be made with design, but are made capable of design themselves; that is, the whole order of intelligent reasonable creatures. We are all of us convinced that we are not of ourselves, that we are made things, that our minds and spirits which we carry about with us, are made things by one unmade. It is but a little while ago that they were not. But besides, they are things themselves capable of design: you know we lay our designs this way and that, we have our contrivance what we will do to-day and to-morrow and (it may be) the third day. And whence should a designing effect proceed but from a designing cause? If there be such a thing as wisdom among the things that are made, there must certainly be a wise maker; otherwise that wisdom being itself a made thing, was made by that which had nothing in it, out of which it could arise. But (as I told you before) it is altogether impossible for something to arise out of nothing itself. Therefore wisdom being somewhat and a made thing, it doth not arise of itself out of nothing, or that is of late beginning. A little while ago they were not, how comes wisdom into such a kind of created being? Why it shows the wisdom of an uncreated Being from whence it came. And,

7. We may farther hence collect the *spirituality* of this Being, that this Being is a Spirit, an eternal Spirit, an eternal mind; otherwise it were not capable of design. There are but two sorts of beings in general that we can so much as conceive of. These are mind and matter. Since we have proved to you, this Being is a designing Being, a wise intelligent Being, that proves it to be a mind and spiritual Being, because matter is capable of no such thing as design; some indeed may apprehend, that though gross matter cannot design, (a clod of clay we know can design nothing,) yet perhaps some finer sort of matter, pure and defected matter, may. But I would have it considered what nearer approach to wisdom and reason there is in a flame of fire, than in a clod of clay. Can any man conceive that there is any greater disposition to reason or the exercise of wisdom in a blast of wind or a flame of fire than in a piece of dirt? Therefore we are here to attribute to the Deity that, that God is pleased to attribute to himself; to

wit, that he is a Spirit, which further represents him to us as the Object of worship, and of suitable worship, forasmuch as he is to be worshipped, and worshipped in spirit and in truth, John iv. 24. And indeed, otherwise it had been altogether impossible that this world should be made by a cause that were not purely mental, in its own being a mental and spiritual thing; for most manifest it is, matter as such is altogether inactive; and if you could suppose never so vast a collection of mere matter, it would always remain a mere dead lump, as even the light of more intelligent and considering heathens could dictate to them: *Mens agitat molem*; it is the mind that doth actuate, and did at first, this mighty *moles* of matter, so as to bring things out of it, appearing in such an order as we do behold. And that we may not go on further in particular enumerations, which we see the apostle, in the text, cuts much shorter, summing up all in the word Godhead,

8. In the last place we may collect from the things that are made that this Being is absolutely *perfect*, or such as wherein all excellencies do concur in their highest perfection, whether they be natural, intellectual, or moral, or those that we may conceive under these distinct notions.

(1.) Natural, as life, original self-sprung life in the highest perfection of it, as it imports both a self-active and self-fruitive principle. And again, pure simplicity and uncompoundedness; the necessary exclusion of all composition that may import any thing of diminution or debasement, to that Being we are speaking of. And again, most absolute immutability and unchangeableness, as that mentioned name, "I AM THAT I AM," imports. And again, immensity, unconfinedness to any space whatsoever; so that "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain" this Being. These are natural perfections that we must understand do belong to him. And then,

(2.) All sorts of intellectual perfection that are truly such; as perfect knowledge of all things, even of minds and spirits themselves; and of future things, that no eye can look into but the Divine eye. Most exact wisdom in all things else, as well as what appears in the making of this world, there is also requisite what doth appear in the continual government of it, in changing the times and seasons, ordering things so as that they shall hit into their proper juncture, and meet in all their necessary circumstances that were needful to concur for such and such purposes. And then,

(3.) Those that are called moral excellencies, such as truth, and righteousness, and holiness, and the like; these must be understood, upon the same grounds, all of them to meet and concur in their highest perfection in this Being. And the demonstration whereof is still too from the things that are made, because there are ideas, images, vestiges of these things to be found up and down in the creation among the things that are made. We find that some things are more fickle than others, and some things more steady. And we find (as I said before) there is such a thing as wisdom, as knowledge, as holiness, as righteousness, to be found among the creatures; and this shows all these things must be in the highest perfection in the unmade Being.

And I might add hereupon, (as that which will be most necessarily consequent,) that this Being must be *infinite* in all these perfections, because there is nothing in being, and nothing supposable ever to come into being, that doth not result and proceed from it. And that which comprehends all being, and all perfection, and all excellency, actual and possible, cannot be less than infinite; for there can be nothing more than all; but it is altogether impossible that there should be any thing, either that is in actual being now, or that can hereafter come into being, that comes not from this radical Being. This Being therefore, which must virtually comprehend all that is actual and all that is possible, within the compass of its own power, cannot be less than infinite, because there can be nothing more than all, nothing beyond all.

And for the same reason it will be most evident that this being can be but *one*. But that I shall not now insist upon; it will fall into the discourse most suitably when we come to show, though it be essentially but *one*, it is personally *three*, and that is only to be shown from the Scripture. The *unity* of the Deity is indeed demonstrable from reason, but that there should be a *trinity* in it, is only to be known from his saying so who best knows his own nature. As "the things of a man" are only to be known by "the spirit of a man that is in him," so the things of God, and what is in his holy nature, (otherwise not revealed,) can only be known by the Spirit of God, as he shall think fit to reveal and make it known to us. But first, it will be needful to lay the foundation thereof in revealed religion, which is the great superstructure that is raised upon natural religion, or the natural notices of God, to wit, to evince to you that the Scriptures are of divine revelation, which will be the next work we have to do.

LECTURE V.*

BEFORE we come to evince to you the authority of the Scriptures, I reckon nothing can be of greater importance than to enlarge somewhat in the USE of that we have been upon; for if we let what God is pleased to make known concerning himself, his own nature and existence, slightly pass without improvement, and lose that, we lose all. All our time is lost, and all our labour is lost, if we can let so great a thing slide away without some proportionable improvement and impression: and herein lies the proper improvement of it. The state of things is sad among us, upon this account, that there is so little knowledge of God in the land; for this it hath cause to mourn, and I doubt will be made to do so; but if we had ten thousand times more of the knowledge of God than we have, if it be not a lively and impressed knowledge, it is all to no purpose; the increase of our knowledge would be but the increase of our sorrow, as it is said upon another account. You have heard from this scripture, that the existence and nature of God (though invisible) are clearly demonstrated by the things he hath made. The improvement I desire you to make of it, will be partly by way of information in some particular truths that may be deduced from it; partly by way of expostulation, touching sins repugnant hereunto; and partly by way of exhortation to agreeable duties.

I. For truths that may be collected and *inferred* hence for our information, you may take such as these:

1. That the mind of man is capable of arriving by way of argument unto the knowledge of God; it is capable of attaining in a way of argumentation to the knowledge of God's existence, and in great measure, of his nature too. For we are told, the eternal power and Godhead are to be clearly seen by the things that are made. Things in themselves invisible, and while they are in themselves invisible, if we are to come to the knowledge of them by the things that are made, how can that be but by way of argument? In themselves they are said to be invisible: those visible things that are beheld are not the eternal power and Godhead themselves, therefore we can come to the knowledge of the former by the latter no way but by intervening arguments, not immediately, for the things that are made are the medium. Therefore it is by way of argumentation formed from this medium, that we come to this knowledge of God's eternal power and Godhead; and this is that which concerns us very deeply to consider, that if in such a way as this we are to arrive at the knowledge of God, then it is of much importance to us to make a reflection upon ourselves, and understand that from hence much is to be learned of our own nature. If in this way we are to understand any thing of God's nature, we must by consequence understand so much of our own nature: that is, that it is a reasonable nature, that it is an intelligent nature, that it is a nature capable of improving itself in point of knowledge, by ratiocination and discourse; and even of knowledge concerning the highest and greatest, and first knowable, that is God and the very nature of God. Indeed here the foundation lies of all obligation that can be upon us to be religious, to be obedient, to be subject to the common Ruler of this world; that is, that God hath given us a nature capable of knowing him, and of arriving to this knowledge of him by this way of ratiocination, as the text

* Preached December 18th, 1699.

implies: that is, to collect that there is an eternal power, and an essential Deity, from things that are made and extant to view. If we are to come by it, so we are to come by it in a reasoning way; and it is impossible for us to receive conviction concerning our own duty towards God, if we have not a right apprehension of our own natures, and what they are susceptible and capable of. God will deal with us at the last day, according to the nature that he hath given us; and therefore we ought to consider ourselves too according to that nature. There will be a judgment-day for men, when there will not for brutes; and if God will difference us in the final judgment, and doth difference us in the way of his present government, from inferior brute creatures, it concerns us to understand the difference too, and to know that we have natures capable of being so dealt with, and as God will finally deal with us; that he doth not deal with us unsuitably to the natures he hath first given us. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding." And if so, then he is to be dealt with accordingly; not like a stock or a stone, or a brute creature. It is a great signification to us of the capacity of the nature of man, that it should be said here, to all those that will use their understandings, the eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen by the things he hath made. And that is one thing we have therefore to collect and infer for our own information, that the mind and understanding are capable of arriving by ratiocination and arguments to the knowledge of God. Indeed it would be a strange kind of perverseness to hesitate at the reception of this, because it is plain, that even lower things than our mental capacity are subservient to our reception of divine knowledge; for faith (that hath to do with the same kind of objects) comes by hearing: and if external sense is to be subservient to our reception of the knowledge of divine things, then certainly much more our understanding, which is a thing far nobler than our external sense, and therefore it is a higher and greater talent that we are to be accountable for. We are to be accountable for all our faculties, as so many talents that God hath intrusted us with; the faculty of seeing, the faculty of hearing, the faculty of remembering, and the like. And what, do we think, among the rest, the faculty of understanding in so plain and important a case as this, is to be exempted and left out? that God should have distinguished us by this in so great a measure from the beasts that perish, and we take no notice of the difference, and not think ourselves accountable for it? No, if we are in this way capable of coming to the knowledge of God's eternal power and Godhead, certainly this ability of coming this way to this knowledge, is that which must be strictly accounted for another day; that we have such a power and use it not, such a capacity and endowment belonging to our natures and never use it, let it lie asleep, never exert and put it forth to so high and to so great a purpose as this is. But,

2. We may further learn hence, that none who have the use of their understandings can ever be innocently ignorant of God. No, saith the text, there is so clear a representation of the eternal power and Godhead in the things that are made, that if men will not yet know God they are left without excuse, without apology, the case admits of no apology. That there should be so clear a representation to an apprehensive creature, and he will not know God; there is nothing to be said for it. There is nothing to be said why they do not know him, why they do not live in the eternal adoration of him. The matter will be resolved entirely and only into this at the last, they have not known, because they have not liked to retain God in their knowledge, as it follows after, in the 20th verse; and into that which we see in that of Ephes. iv. 18. that men are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them and the blindness of their hearts." Pray what kind of blindness is the blindness of the heart? That can be no blindness but voluntary blindness, affected blindness, chosen blindness; that men are blind because they will be blind, because they will not see. A blindness of the mere speculative understanding is quite another thing, but such a blindness as is referred to the heart, as having its seat and subject there, must mean a blindness that men voluntarily do continue themselves in, as he that stiffly and resolvedly winks that he may not see the light.

3. We may further infer hence, that the clearest rational knowledge of God is by no means so acquiesced in, as if that would serve the turn, and be answerable to the saving purposes and necessities of our souls. The rational knowledge of God; it may be had and it must be had, but it must not be rested in; for even this knowledge that doth in the means, the objective representation, lie so fairly compassable, (for the discovery is clear,) is supposed to be clear; the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, clearly to be seen, and there may be a reception in some measure, and proportionable to the representation of the object. Besides the objective representation, there may be a subjective reception; it is a supposable thing, and it is frequent, (though not universal,) that these things here spoken of under the notion of invisibles, are not only clearly to be seen, but seen: and yet, though this knowledge do lie so fairly compassable, and may be actually obtained and received, men, for all that, may be left without excuse, for the reason referred to in the verse next but one foregoing, that is, that the truth that is received is held in unrighteousness. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." And by this truth (it is plain by what follows) is principally and chiefly meant the truth concerning the existence and nature of God, "that which may be known of God" (so it immediately follows) "is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them:" for the invisible things, such truths as these, may not only be represented but received; and being so, yet held in unrighteousness, defeated of their proper design; so that such are left without excuse; it not attaining the end that such a representation doth finally aim at. Indeed God would never be angry without a cause; therefore if they be under wrath, if the wrath of God be revealed from heaven, and flame against a wicked, atheistical world, it is plain they are without excuse.

But now, will that knowledge of God serve our turn that will only leave us inexcusable? will that answer the purposes and necessities of our souls? It is a supposable thing that the clearest merely rational knowledge of God, may but leave men without excuse, therefore somewhat more is necessary, another sort of knowledge. That which is rational, may be had and ought to be had, and we shall most dearly answer for it, if we have it not: but then when we have it, that is not enough, it is necessary, but not sufficient.

But then it may be said, What more is there wanting than to know clearly the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead? Why I shall tell you in one word: To have that clear knowledge made vital. It is not the mere clearness, but the vitality, of the knowledge of God that must do the needful work in our souls, in order to our present serving of God, and walking and conversing with him in this world, and our final felicity and blessedness with him in the other world. Light there must be, but it must be the light of life, otherwise we shall never be the better for it. A light that is not vital will serve to condemn, but only a light that is vital will serve to save. There is, it is true, a light universally shining in every intelligent mind, in every conscience of man, but it is a light so little profitable to the necessity of an immortal soul, that that light is said to be but darkness, as in that Matt. vi. 23. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" That is, serves for the advantage of souls (if they do acquiesce and take up their rest there) no more than mere darkness would have done. It is but equal to darkness, as to any thing of fruit, emolument, and profit to them. And therefore, that light which is truly salutary and finally saving, is the light of life, such is the light which comes by Christ: "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life," John viii. 12.

But you will say, What is the difference? One man knows God, that is, he is well assured, and able rationally to prove and demonstrate to another man, the existence of God and many particular things concerning his nature; and perhaps can speak more rationally to such a purpose

than many another man that carries the reputation of a pious man, whilst perhaps this man is not so: pray what is the difference?

Why truly, this is a thing (because I must not insist in such a course as I am in, upon particulars) that may (I should think) be easily understood by any one. One, he knows the kind or nature of this or that food, or this or that drink, he is able to discourse rationally of it, and give an accurate description of the kind and properties of this or that sort of meat, or drink; another, he eats and drinks of it. Let the former discourse as long as he will, and never so understandingly and knowingly, and not eat or drink, he will be famished for all his knowledge: the other, he knows this is good meat, and this is good drink; and he eats and drinks heartily and is refreshed, and lives by it. Is not here a plain difference? Why here is the very difference as to the knowledge of God. One, he can discourse rationally and learnedly about many invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, but he never closeth with him, his soul never inwardly unites with him as his best good, never subjects to him as his highest Lord, never fears him, never loves him, never trusts in him, nor delights in him as the other doth. Do you not begin to apprehend here is a vast difference between knowledge and knowledge; one sort of the knowledge of God and another? How plain is it that with many men, the clearest and truest notions of God are only dead notions; lie dead in their minds, operate nothing there, make them no other sort of men than they would be, if they knew no such thing; or if they thought or believed quite the contrary! Take out all those notions of God which some men have in their minds, and put in the room of them quite contrary notions, a scheme of mere atheism, and the men are found not at all to differ. That man whose head before was full of atheism, is just the same man as when his head was full of atheism. There is knowledge, but no vitality; all his notions of God lie dead, and so are as if they were not. But here is the great difference, when the light of life concerning God and the invisible things of God comes into the soul of a man, when these vital beams strike into the very centre of a man's heart, that the man not only hath light, about these things, but is light. A wicked man hath light, but it is said of a good man, a regenerate man, he is light. "Ye were darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord:" it hath quite altered his temper, begot a new frame and habit in his soul: that is, the knowledge of God hath begot an impression of godliness; and this is that you are to be driving at, and not to take up with any knowledge of God short of this. "He hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true," 1 John v. 20. We know him, and by that knowledge are wrought into a vital union. "We are in him, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

But it may be said, If such a further superadded knowledge of God be so necessary, what is the former rational knowledge worth? what doth it signify? and what doth it serve for?

Why let me bring you back to the former illustration that I gave you before, about the knowledge of meat and drink. You see a plain difference between barely knowing that this is good and useful food, that would be proper and suitable drink; and knowing the same thing by taste and reception in order to nutrition: there is a very plain difference. But what! is the former knowledge therefore useless? that is, to know that this is good meat and drink, is it useless? Is it not a very necessary knowledge that a man should know what is fit to be eaten and drank and what not? If you had not so much knowledge of the former sort as to be able to say, "this is good food which, being duly received, may do me good; and that is poison; if I meddle with it, it will destroy me;" you could not distinguish bread and a stone; you could make no distinction. In what a case were that man in, that did not know bread and a stone asunder! So here, without such a rational knowledge of God, you cannot understand why one ought to be worshipped more than another, why more to be trusted, more to be loved than another. If you had not that former knowledge of God, you would not be able to distinguish between a proper object of adoration. But what can be plainer than this, that many things may be necessary for such and such a purpose, that yet are not sufficient for that purpose? We must distinguish between necessity and sufficiency. A rational knowledge of God is necessary; it doth not therefore follow that it is sufficient. If one of you did design, in coming hither, to come to the seat where you use to sit, it is necessary that in order to your coming to the seat, that you come to the door. But is therefore coming to the door sufficient? No, you cannot come to your seat unless you come to the door, but it doth not therefore follow that you had nothing more to do, when you came hither to hear a sermon, than only just to come to the door. Pray apprehend this, that many things are necessary that are not enough. It is necessary that you have this rational knowledge of God as the door, as an intermission into that vital unitive knowledge of him which is also necessary and which only is sufficient. And if the former of these be aimed at, with a design for the latter, with an humble dependence and sense of our own nothingness, blessing God that he is pleased, in that natural way, to reveal so much of himself, but also humbly craving, "Lord, do not leave me here, let this vital light shine into my dark soul;" where his further communications are not despised, they will be had; where they are valued, where they are sought, an inquiring soul will not be left destitute. If indeed you think that your case is well already, and that you need no more of God, and that all is well enough, you may sit still and perish till you sink into perdition. But know that the benignity of his nature, and the methods he hath set on foot for the recovery and saving of lost sinners, will not let him throw away any soul that doth cry after him; will not hide himself from them that value the vital, efficacious, transforming knowledge of him as life itself, and beyond this natural life, which is the true sense of every sincere soul.

4. We may collect hence, that the objection against the acknowledgment of a Deity, from his invisibility, must be most absurd, and contemptibly weak and silly. Nothing can be more so; "for the invisible things of him are clearly seen by the things that are made." Therefore, nothing can be more foolish than for one to say, "I will believe there is no God, because I see him not: I see not the brightness of the appearance of his glory that should make me apprehend such a Being perfect, superior to, and more excellent than, all other that I have had the knowledge of:" nothing can be more childish than this, for it is very plain that if God could be seen, he could not be God. The thing carries a repugnancy in itself; so mean a nature as can be visible cannot be the Divine nature. As a heathen said, we are not to ascribe unto God body, or colour, or quantity, or any such thing that belongs to objects that fall under our sense. "If we know (saith he) that there is a coporeal nature, and if we know that there is an incorporeal nature, in which of these shall we place the Divine Being? Certainly (saith he) in the incorporeal nature, which is higher and more excellent than to be seen with eyes, or to be heard with ears, or felt with hands, or expressed with human voice." It was the saying of Maximus Tyrius, the heathen philosopher. And I pray you, Why should we be so averse to the entertainment and reception of invisibles in our minds? For which is nearer akin to our minds, invisible things, or visible? Are not our minds invisible? He thinks with himself, "I am not to acknowledge a Deity unless I see him." Pray what is it in you that thinks so, that is so sensible; and capable of thinking at all? Did you ever see your own souls? Did you ever see your own minds? Are not we, as to the most noble and excellent part of ourselves, rather to be accounted ourselves among invisibles than among visibles? It was the saying of a poor pagan, when the season of his dying approached, and his friends about him were discoursing of his burial: "Bury me," saith he, "do you talk of burying me? what do you think this body is to me? Do with it when I am gone what you please: if you can catch me, bury me, but you shall never do that, for do you think this body is me?" And pray will you think so basely of yourselves as that this body is you? If it be not, it is a mind, a spirit, a soul in you, that is you: and is not that nearer of kin, to invisible things than visible? That there

should be an averseness and shyness to entertain in our minds invisible things because they are invisible, when our minds themselves are invisible, nothing can be more unaccountable and unreasonable than this. It shows us to be very low sunk, that the minds and spirits of men are become strangely degenerate things, when any thing because it is invisible is therefore reckoned unsuitable to them, for a reason for which they should be reckoned most of all suitable. And alas! how little things are we capable of comprehending by our sight, in comparison of the things that we cannot see! Is our sight fit to be the measure of all realities? How small a part of this universe can we measure with our eye! and must all the rest, because we see it not, go for just nothing? Surely there are unspeakably greater things which we see not, than there are that we see. Therefore a thing should not be reckoned less real, or less considerable, or less excellent, because it is invisible to us, that is, to the eye of our flesh; but unspeakably the more excellent and great for that very reason, for its not being seen.

5. We may hence learn the unjust and mad presumption that is in sin. When the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen in the things that are made, that is, they are clearly to be seen by the things that are made, that they have an invisible Maker, and the eternal power and Godhead of this their Maker is clearly to be seen, then how unjust and mad a presumption is it to sin! For is not that an affront to thy Maker? What doth sin signify but ungovernableness to him that hath power to govern me? And who hath a right to govern you, if not he that made you out of nothing? Are not you one of the things that were made? and who therefore shows the eternal power and Godhead of your Maker? How unjust a presumption then is it to sin! But how mad a presumption is it besides! That is, to consider a world of sinful creatures in an apostacy from God and a rebellion against him: from whom have they revolted? against whom have they rebelled? They are things that are made, that have rebelled against him that made them. An amazing thing, to consider the inhabitants of this world, the intelligent inhabitants of it! They are a company of made things, and this world that they inhabit is a made thing. A made thing! what doth that signify? Why a thing depending upon will and pleasure; a thing that may be, or not be; a thing that may continue in being or be thrown into nothing, thrown into destruction the next moment. Why here is a company of creatures, that have taken upon them to revolt from their Maker, to rebel against him that made them. A strange thing! they have not (as the expression is) a footing for their feet; they are made things, and this world a made thing; all which may be swept away with a breath. For men to take upon them to rise up against the authority of him that made them, when they cannot command a breath, not so much as a breath: for that which hath been made, how presently can he unmake it! That which hath been made by him can be unmade by him in a moment: all this world gone in a moment: how easily may that be done by him! Therefore sin, considered in its general nature, is the most unjust and mad presumption that ever could enter into the mind of a rational creature; unjust towards God, and mad as to ourselves. Oh! think whither we are sunk, and what a sort of creatures we are become, and how admirable the Divine patience is, that lets such a sort of creatures as we are live in this world; a world which we did not furnish, which we did not make, and which he can in a breath blow away into nothing, as he raised it up out of nothing, by a breath the other way.

6. See here the admirable greatness of God. Oh! how we should hence apprehend and adore the Divine greatness! The things that are made clearly demonstrate his invisible power and Godhead: and do but consider these two things—the greatness of the things that are made, and —how little they yet represent God. And then see what cause we have from hence to admire his most adorable greatness.

(1.) How great the things are that are made. Alas, what a spot, a point, is this earth of ours in comparison of the universe! If our thoughts should go no further than our own vortex, in which the sun, and moon, and planets have their course, how much more unmeasureable to our thoughts is that vortex than this earth of ours! This earth, in comparison of that vortex, is no more than a spot to the universe. It is a far less considerable point to the whole universe than this earth is to our vortex, or that circle that doth immediately encompass it. And then to think of the vastness of this universe; all which, and all that it contains, are but things that are made. How mighty a One then is their Maker, their invisible Maker! The greatness of the creation gives us a great representation of the greatness of the Creator. But it adds unspeakably more if,

(2.) We consider, that yet all which creation can represent unto us of the Divine Being, is a mere nothing in comparison of what it represents not: for there is a whole infinitude of being besides, that was from eternity, everlasting of itself. And it is but a minute effort of the Divine eternal power that is seen in this universe; for all the universe is but a finite thing, as great as it can be supposed to be, it is still but a finite thing: but then, there is an infinity of being besides, that is from all eternity, the being of the invisible God. Take this whole created universe, and it is but a shadow in comparison of "I AM." That Being that claims to itself the name of "I AM," and there is nothing besides ME; nothing fit to be called being besides my own: for all made being is but at will and pleasure, raised up by a breath, and capable of being reduced to nothing by a breath. The whole creation, the whole universe, but a bubble created by the breath of the Almighty; and may be let to sink again, if he please, by the retraction or withdrawing of that breath. If then the things made clearly demonstrate the invisible things; even the eternal power and Godhead of their Maker, how great a one is HE, first, that could make so great a world as this, and yet, secondly, when that is done, it can represent so little of him! There is yet an infinitude of being appropriate to himself. Besides, how little a portion do we take up of him, as it is said, Job xxvi. 5—14. when we view his ways, take notice of such and such things in the course of nature, (as he here speaks of,) how "hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering;" how "he stretcheth the north over the empty place," how "he collects the waters into the clouds, and the clouds are not rent under them: these (saith he) are part of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him?" Oh! how great a thing were it, if we did but once learn to apprehend the difference between beings unmade and made, between made beings and the eternal unmade Being. And again,

7. We may learn hence the impudency of the temper, the deceiver and the destroyer (as much as in him lies) of the souls of men; that he should ever go about to make any one believe that there is not a God. How strange impudency is it, that he should ever presume he can make an intelligent mind apprehend that there is not a God, when the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are so clearly seen in the things that are made! Think of this if any of you are vexed at any time (as perhaps many of you may) with malicious injections from that wicked one, that would fain make you believe there is no God; why turn upon him with disdain: "Thou impudent liar, wouldst thou make me believe against my own eyes, against the clear apprehensions of my own mind? What, doth not every thing I see, doth not every thing I hear, proclaim the Godhead to me? could there be any thing of being, any thing of motion, any thing of life through this whole creation, if there were not an original Author of all this? Doth not every being speak a first being, and all wisdom speak the first wisdom, and all love the first love, and all goodness speak the first goodness? Can any thing of itself come out of nothing? Nothing is more obvious to a considering mind (as hath been urged before) than that we can be surer of nothing than we are of this—that suppose nothing at all were in being, to eternity nothing could ever be in being. But something is in being now: and if that be the account that is to be given, how there comes to be any thing in being; that is, that there hath been something eternally in being, then that which was eternally in being is the cause of all things that are in being. The cause that was eternally in being, must bear proportion to the effect. If wisdom and goodness are to be found amongst made things, they are not

nothing; you cannot say that wisdom is nothing, and knowledge nothing, justice nothing, for then there would be no difference between a wise man and a fool. If they are something, they could not of themselves come out of nothing; therefore there must have been eternal goodness, wisdom, and life; that that in itself lived, and lives to all eternity: for you see there are such things as these among what is made. Why then, it is fit to retort upon the tempter with disdain, "Dost thou go about to make me believe, against the clear light of my own mind, that there is not a God, when it is clearly seen from the things that are made?" If there were nothing else, this proves the eternal Being, that there must be an eternal Cause that hath in it something proportionable to the visible effects that are to be seen, impressed even upon the things that are made. Characters appearing in the effect must have something correspondent to them in their cause, otherwise something must come of itself out of nothing, which is simply the most impossible thing that can be thought. I would only add this in the last place,

8. Whosoever they are that do terminate their thoughts upon this visible world, and look no further, they resist, nay (as much as in them is) defeat and destroy the very design of the creation. Why hath God made such a world as this, and set such creatures as we in it? It is, that this world may be an extant, continual standing representation to us, an evidence, a proof of his invisible eternal power and Godhead who made it. We have our concerns and business lying here, within this visible world, from day to day; here we are too apt to take up our thoughts, our desires, our designs; they terminate upon this visible world. If we let them do so, if we tolerate ourselves in such a course as this, it is (as much as in us is) to defeat and destroy the design of the creation. God hath designed this visible frame of things to be to us a continual monument and representation of himself; but we look to the things that are made, and there we let our eyes stay and terminate, and never look through them to that which is unmade. This would be a like case, as if one should have a very curious perspective put into his hands, that was very much adorned and beautified with every thing of external ornature that art could confer upon it, and holds it in his hand, turns it this way and that, and views it on every side for a long time together, and then lays it aside, never looks through it; he would see a vast country that now appears to him nothing else but a dark shadow: just so men deal with this visible creation and frame of things; they look upon it, take notice of the variety of creatures that are in it, they look on every side of this visible world, as it doth apply itself to them, and as they have opportunity to view the things therein; but whereas it was intended as a perspective, that they might look through it into the invisible power and Godhead of him that made all, this never comes into their minds. How preposterous a course is this! It is little apprehended how guilty we make ourselves in this kind, every day, when we let our minds stay upon any creature of God, this or that man or woman, or house or star, (if we should go so high,) and never think of God; while they are all made things, that tend to represent to us their Maker. Oh! how little is the end answered and considered, why we have such a frame of things set in view and kept in view continually before us, that we might look through them and adore, look up and adore, that we might through all view and behold the great Author of all, and bow our heads before him. When we eat and drink, and never think of God, commend the food and drink, and never think of God; here we take up with the creature, the made thing, and never consider the unmade Maker of it and of us. The end is defeated and lost, for which this world was made and we placed in it, while we look not through things visible and made, unto him that is invisible and unmade.

LECTURE VI.*

II. There are hereupon most apparent and very blamable things, about which it is needful that we should be *expostulated* with, and that we do expostulate with ourselves concerning them: otherwise it would be in vain that another should reprove us, if we be not brought by it to reprove ourselves; or that another should expostulate with our own souls. And this we should do upon that which hath been opened and improved in respect of such things as these: as,

1. Why are we yet so much in doubt concerning what is so clearly demonstrable? the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, which are things so clearly seen (though they are in themselves invisible) by visible effects, by things that are made. Why are our minds yet pendulous and in suspense about so very plain and demonstrable things? For what, can it enter into our minds to think this world rose up out of itself, without a Maker, out of nothing? Who of us can endure (if he consider) the gross absurdity of such a thought? And since we may so easily be at a certainty, why are we not at certainty in so plain a case? why do not our minds come to a settlement? why are they so off and on? why do we hover and halt between two opinions, as we did not know whether God be God, yea or no? or whether he were to be stuck to as such? as the prophet deals with that people so much divided in opinion between God and Baal. But indeed ours would be a worse division and more absurd, for if we are divided in our own minds in this case. it must be between a God and no God. There was no question among them, but there was and must be some God or other, but only the question was, whether that God the people owned. or another, were the God; that was all the doubt, but this is a much wider case, when the question is between a God and no God; and nothing can be more evident than the things that are made, must have had some maker and author. It is a comfortable thing to ourselves to feel the ground firm under us as to this first and deepest fundamental; a very comfortable thing for us to feel that it shakes not. But know withal, it is a very dutiful thing towards our Maker to be at a point, and not to be always disputing, or to have perpetual disceptations within ourselves, about that which is prerequisite to our duty; for that suspends all duty, and lays a restraint upon every thing of duty towards him; while we waver and hover in our spirits about so plain a thing as this. Let us be all at a certainty, when we may be so easily at a certainty; as certain (as I have urged to you) about this as we can be of any thing whatsoever; for we cannot be more certain of any thing than we can be of this, that we ourselves are made things; for whatsoever is unmade must have been from everlasting, inasmuch as nothing that is made but it hath received a beginning of being. Whatsoever is unmade must have no beginning of being, must have been from everlasting. But can you be surer of any thing than that you have not been from everlasting? You know you have not been from everlasting, therefore you are made things. And again; you cannot be surer of any thing than you are of this, that you are such a sort of made things as can think, as have a power of thought; you are not more sure that you can see, than you are that you can think, and therefore you do know and are sure, that you have minds and spirits about you; for you are sure that flesh and blood and bones cannot think; you cannot be surer of any thing than you are of this, that this bulk of a body of yours cannot exercise a thought. Well then, if you be a made sort of thing, and you find you have a power of thought belonging to you, and therefore that you have a mind and spirit belonging to you, you must then have proceeded from an unmade mind and Spirit, an unmade self-subsisting mind and Spirit; and this is God, and can be nothing but God. This is all as plain as any thing is that we see with our eyes, therefore do not pretend to be uncertain in a matter wherein it is so easy to you to be at a certainty, when so much also doth depend upon it. And blame yourselves for this, if you have been pendulous in so plain a case hitherto. Why am I in doubt when I should have been loving, serving, fearing, and adoring this invisible Deity all this while? Why have I suffered doubts to hang on my mind in so plain a case? And,

2. Let us expostulate with ourselves about this, that our apprehensions of the eternal God are so feeble and languid

* Preached December 28th, 1669.

and ineffectual as they have been hitherto, and for the most part (the Lord knows) yet are; that our minds have not only been in a dubious uncertainty, but that the apprehensions we have had, have had so little of vitality and efficacy and power in them, to form our spirits and govern our way and course agreeably thereunto. For, (as was told you by way of inference,) there needs not only clear knowledge, but vital knowledge of the Deity. And now let me a little further insist upon it, that is, that there is something more requisite than certainty, somewhat besides a certainty of apprehension and knowledge about it. Such things as there are to be superadded thereto; that is, efficacy, energy, and operative power. I may be certain of those things that do concern me God-ward, or that do concern me in reference to my soul, and yet feel little of efficacy and power in the most certain and undoubting thoughts that I can have about such things; that is, though I may have as great a certainty about the objects of my mind as I can have about the objects of sense; yet the objects of sense do always strike with more efficacy than the objects of the mind do. Experience speaks this plainly, and I need but appeal to every one's experience about it. I might illustrate it to you by a very plain and obvious instance or two, how much more the things that fall under present sense do affect us, than the things do that fall not under sense. Though we are not more certain about the one than we are about the other. As in reference to these bodies of ours, we are not more certain that we do at present feel any thing, whether it be grateful or ungrateful to our sense, than we are certain that at one time or other we shall die. But is there any one that doth sensibly fear death, and set himself thereupon to prepare for it, as he doth feel pain when that is upon him? Therefore I say, we do need something to be superadded to our certainty to enliven our apprehensions, a power and energy is needful to be superadded to them. As I told you before, we are as certain we can think, as we are certain we can see; we are not more sure we can see with our eye, than we are sure that we can think with our minds; yet the things we do see with our eyes, do affect us more than the things we only apprehend with our minds; therefore do we need to have a great deal of efficacy and power superadded to the apprehensions of our minds concerning the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead. And since it is plain we do need it, that is, that such apprehensions often lie in our minds, and work nothing; but the case is with us as if we had them not, as if our minds were vacant of such apprehensions: surely we should not lie still patient in such a case as this; when these apprehensions of God are the most important that can have place in our minds. Why are we so pleased with ourselves, and so much at ease concerning this thing, that our apprehensions of the Godhead should have so little efficacy with them as they have to command our spirits? It is a relievable case, as well as there is a necessity there should be a relief sought and had in it. If he is pleased to shine into our minds himself, then there will be efficacy go with our certainty; when he is pleased to strike through the consistent darkness that doth inwrap our hearts, and to shine into our hearts by giving us the light of the knowledge of his own glory, then there will be power in our apprehensions of the invisible God, and then in his light we shall see light, as in that Psalm xxxvi. 9. Therefore, for this should we supplicate every day more earnestly than we do for daily bread; "I need thy delivering influence, O Lord, to quicken dead notions of things that lie in my mind, that they may have power and be operative in me, as much as I need daily bread, and momently breath." This should be our sense, and with waiting and craving eyes should we be looking up daily and continually; for it is dutiful, that this should be the posture of made spirits towards the unmade Spirit, of produced spirits towards their great Parent, the original universal Spirit that is the Parent of all; that they may be continually maintained and held in life by vital communications from himself: this he would take well; it is childlike, it is filial deportment towards the supreme, original, eternal Spirit, whose offspring their spirits are. A parent is pleased to have a child express and own his dependance upon him. When we cut off these spirits of ours from the unmade eternal Spirit, this is apostacy, disloyalty; this is to set up ourselves and for ourselves, and no wonder if we languish and perish by it. And,

3. We should expostulate with ourselves about our so frequent unmindfulness of the invisible eternal God, when we have so much occasion to mind him every hour; for that things that are made, reveal him to us continually; we cannot open our eyes, but we must see something or other the should put us in mind of God: we shall behold some of the made things, that should be still putting us in mind of their Maker, theirs and ours. And,

4. Why are we so little conversant with God, so unconversable towards him, when he is continually surrounding us, compassing us about before and behind, in all the made things which do encompass us? God is in them, or they are all in him, all living, and moving, and having their being in him. This conversableness with God, or a disposition of spirit to converse with him, it imports more than bare minding of him, thinking of him; it carries in it an application of faith towards him. It is a thing that involves complacency in the nature of it, as you can any of you easily apprehend. I converse electively with whom or what I converse with, out of choice, and for a complacential inclination of my own mind. Oh! why is there no more of this with us towards God, the unmade and eternal Being, while he continually besets us in the things that are made, and who is nearer to us than we are to ourselves! He is in us if we would but look in, and meet with him, and apply ourselves to him. It was first the saying of a heathen, (taken up since and improved by many in the Christian church, both ancient and modern writers,) "God is more inward to us, than we are to ourselves, and yet we will not converse with him." It was Plato's saying first. But will we not converse with him? How inexcusable a thing is this, his own creature to be a stranger to him; a creature that he made! "I that have made thee, (may he say,) and made thee as thou art, given thee a reasonable, intelligent, apprehensive, immortal mind and spirit, and wilt thou not know me? wilt thou not converse with me? wilt thou not acquaint thyself with me? wilt thou not lead thy life with me?" What have we to say to this?

5. Why do we not more frequently do him homage, when we dwell in a world that is all his? Every thing that we can use and enjoy in it, are all made things, and made by him, and this world that contains and inwraps them all, itself a made thing, and we are made things; why are we not more frequently doing him homage? We can take up nothing, we can use nothing, we can enjoy nothing in all this whole world but what he hath made. And what! not do him homage, deep, inward, profound homage? how inexcusable is this! We know we did not make or furnish this world; we were brought into it, placed in it, and we find ourselves supplied with all things necessary for our support and for our accommodation, suitable to that sort of being that God hath given us. And shall we not do him frequent homage? Suppose a man should rush into one of your houses and set himself by your fire-side, and make use of such and such provisions of your house, as he can lay his hands on, and take no notice of you, would you long bear so barbarous a usage as this? And is not this the very case? You come here into this world that God hath made, and not you; and every thing is his that you can lay your hands upon, or make any use of; and to take up and use this and the other thing, and never look up, or not often look up to him: or not look up with a more delightful sense of your obligation to him, than (God knows) is too common with us; how can we defend ourselves against our own thoughts, against our own reasonings, in this case? And further,

6. Why do we drive designs here in this world, apart from him, without reference to him? This, and that, and the other thing I do to please myself, or to advance myself, without any thoughts of God, without any referring to him. I lay my designs without him; I will go to such and such a place, I will abide there so long, I will there do so and so, I will "buy and sell and get gain," when we "ought to say, If the Lord will, I will do so and so." He that is the Author and Lord of all this made world, what! do you think to move to and fro in it without reference to him, and drive designs for yourselves apart from him? Sure, the forming of a design should always be accompanied

with an act of worship, there should still be a dedicating of our designs to him, as well as of ourselves: for what is plainer, than that he that is the Alpha must be the Omega too? Hath he not made himself known to us by those conjunct titles, the first and the last? "Of him, and by him, and to him are all things," that he alone might have the glory. There should be a tribute of glory paid him, in every thing we design, and more especially in reference to his design. When we come to take notice of that great design of his, oh! how it might make our hearts shake within us, to think what sort of acknowledgments God hath in this world, even in that part of the world that is called Christian, in reference to some of the great things, and even the greatest thing that ever was done since there was such a world in being. That is, that extraordinary descent of God into the world, in the person of his own Son, taking upon him human flesh, becoming the Emmanuel, the Divine nature, the invisible Godhead, in the second person, uniting itself with the manhood. Here are acknowledgments of this made amongst us; but it might make our hearts shake within us, to think of what kind. That is, according to the usage of too many, the descent of our blessed Lord, the eternal Word, in human flesh, they seem to think (that their practice expresseth) that the nativity of our Lord is not to be celebrated fitly but by a debauch; they cannot fitly celebrate the nativity of Christ, but by being drunk. Monstrous wickedness! To think that the great God is to be worshipped so unsuitably to himself; when he is to be made the end of all things. The Former of all things; how is he made the end, otherwise than as he is glorified? But to glorify him, to pretend to glorify him, by breaking his laws, by violating his known and most sacred precepts! By breaking the law, dishonourest thou God? Rom. ii. 23. That was bad enough; but it is much worse, by breaking the law, to dishonour God under the pretence of doing him honour, to think that I honour him by so palpably dishonouring him. And,

7. Why are we so prone to blame and censure the methods of his government over this world, which he hath made, and when by it, and the things in it that he hath made, he is proclaiming to us his eternal power and Godhead? Is he not able wisely and well to govern his own creation? Could he bring such a world as this out of nothing into being, and doth he not know what to do with it, now he hath made it, and how to order the concerns of it? Oh! how little is God reverenced as the Creator and Former of all things, when we take upon us to censure, and blame, and tax his doings? Why do we strive with him, when he gives not account of any of his matters? Job xxxiii. 13. He is far above it. And like it is that, xl. 2. "Shall he that contends with the Almighty, instruct him? He that reproves God, let him answer it." What! for man to take upon him to reprove God, to say he might have ordered things better, so and so, things might have been brought about in a fitter season, might have been done sooner, they might have been compassed by fitter methods, by more suitable instruments, and the like. Sure we forget ourselves when we consider not, that "the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead," are all testified by the things that are made. And what! cannot "the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead," guide and manage things more wisely than we? "Wo to him that strives with his Maker! Let the postherd strive with the potsherd of the earth," Isaiah xlv. 9. Let them choose their match. And those many expressions we have from himself in the latter end of the book of Job; "Canst thou do so and so?" doth intimate this all along to them and to us, that unless we could do such and such things; unless we could lay the foundation of such a world as this; unless we could stretch out such another heaven, and form and establish such another earth; unless we could span the heavens with our hands, and measure the dust of the earth, and gather the winds in our fists, and set bounds and limits to the sea as we please: "You are not my match (saith God) unless you can do such and such things. And if you are not my match, why will you strive with me? why will you contend with me? why should your wisdom vie with mine, and your will with mine, and your interest with mine?" And again,

8. Why do we so little covet him for our portion, who is plainly proved by the things that are made to comprehend in himself, virtually, all the perfections of this world, and formally, infinitely more? For there must be infinitely more in himself than is laid out on creation. Do you think he did exhaust himself in making such a world as this? The world when all is done is but a finite thing, all that is made is but finite, but that which is unmade is still infinite. He that comprehends in himself all excellency, all goodness, all perfection, created and uncreated, must certainly be a sufficient portion for us. The absolutely perfect Being, or (which is all one in Scripture) God all-sufficient, must be a competent satisfying portion (one would think) for any one. Why then do we not covet him more for our portion? why is this not more the sense of our souls, "Whom have I heaven but thee? and who is there on earth, that can come in comparison with thee?" "When heaven and earth are all made things and made by thee, there must be in thee infinitely more than in both." But when we take up with so mean and little things in our thoughts, (inasmuch as we know it belongs to the Deity to be the portion and blessedness of a soul,) let us hereupon think with ourselves, what an affront we put upon the infinite eternal Godhead, to think it possible for any creature to fill up his room. It is a most insolent affront to the infinite eternal God, to think that any creature can be to you instead of God: an affront that you can never expiate with your blood. This is to undeify him. Him, whom in all your thoughts you should deify, you nullify; for make him any thing less than God, and you make him nothing. And,

9. Why do we no more fear him as an enemy, when he hath demonstrated his eternal power and Godhead by the things that are made? and all the invisible things that belong to his nature besides, are all demonstrated by the things that are made? Why do we not more fear to have such a one for our enemy? "Fear ye not me, (saith the Lord,) who hath bounded the sea that it cannot pass; and though the waves thereof toss themselves they cannot go over?" giving that one instance, when he could have given thousands as great, in that 5th Jeremiah:) "what stupid creatures are you that you will not fear me, when ye have such an instance as this and thousands more always in view before you, of my invisible eternal Godhead, that hath in time displayed and showed itself forth! And,

10. Lastly, Why are we so prone to fear men, the creatures of God, while we so little fear and stand in awe of him? It is still a wrong to our Maker, a wrong done to God, considered under the notion of Creator. Look to that, Isa. li. 12. "Who art thou, that art afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who stretched forth the heavens?" inasmuch as he is the Maker and Lord of all. This shows that it is an insolency against him and the rights of his Godhead, to place your supreme fear on any thing besides him. Therefore the form of speech there is very remarkable, "Who art thou, that art afraid of a man?" The form of speech is reprehensive and expostulatory, "Who art thou?" When people find themselves seized with any immoderate fears, they are wont to pity themselves, and to look upon it as an infelicity: but they forget it is a crime; and those words represent it as a crime, "Who art thou that art afraid—who art thou?" What doth that signify? Why, it signifies thus much, Thou takest too much upon thee, while thou thinkest thou art only to be pitied; thou dost little consider how faulty thou art, thou dost transpose the government, thou deposest the Lord thy Maker, and settest up a mortal thing upon his throne. Who art thou that takest upon thee at this rate, to undeify God and deify the creature, a mortal worm? Who art thou that turnest all things upside down, to depress the Maker and to exalt a little piece of animated clay into his place? This is very deeply to be considered, that to have our spirits more liable to be awed by a man, a mortal thing, than by the eternal immortal God, is a doing violence and a wrong to, and encroaching upon the rights of the eternal Godhead. Well now, about such things as these we should expostulate with ourselves.

III. I shall shut up all with some particulars of most apparent duty, to which we need to be exhorted in reference to what hath been hitherto said. As,

1. Since "the invisible things of God, his eternal power

and Godhead," are so clearly demonstrable by the things that are made, let us learn more to contemplate these invisible things of God, in the visible things that we have before our eyes: and know that it is an argument of very great spirituality so to do. Let the examples we have in Scripture engage our minds more this way. To look over such Psalms as Psalm the 8th, the 104th, and the 148th, all full of admiration of the works of God: and a great many more, with multitudes of passages of Scripture besides in other places; showing how much the spirits of the saints of old have been exercised and taken up in admiring God upon those conspicuous appearances, that have been of his glory in the creation. I doubt there is altogether a fault among us that we so little apply our minds this way. But know it is our duty to be exercised in it, to take times on purpose to contemplate God in the creature, to behold and view the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, in the things that are made. And,

2. Hereupon joyfully acknowledge this God for your God; considering the case of the blinded besotted pagans, who worship stocks and stones for deities, or the sun, moon, and stars; who pray to a god that cannot save: the generality of the more besotted of them; though it be true, indeed, among pagans there have been those that have been much wiser and of more refined minds. But since it hath pleased God more expressly to manifest himself to you, joyfully acknowledge it, as his people of old have been wont to do. "Their gods are idols, the works of men's hands; but our God made the heavens." And as it is in that Jer. x. 11. "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." When there are such multitudes of fictitious deities under a doom to perish, all the idols of this world, and this world itself, that great idol, that is most set up and exalted against God; oh! do you joyfully acknowledge this God for your God, that you are sure is the only living and true God. Our God that made the heavens; own your relation to him, walk in his name, as "all people will do, every one in the name of his God."

3. Resign and devote yourselves absolutely to him, for you are made things, and he is your Maker. And can one have a greater right in any thing than that which he hath made, and made out of nothing? not given it an external accidental form only, but given it its whole being. And so is the matter between him and you. Wherefore it is to God you must give yourselves: give him your whole being, body and soul and all that you have; for it is all but made, and it is the right and property of him that made you.

4. Trust in him with all your hearts, commit yourselves entirely and cheerfully to him. Who would scruple to do so to so kind and benign a Maker? for was it not in his choice and power once, whether he would have made you or not? was it not determinate by him, by his pleasure, whether you should be or not be? If you have devoted yourselves to him, so as to be his by choice and consent, as well as by natural right, know then that you have all the encouragement in the world to intrust and commit yourselves to him as to a faithful Creator; as the expression is 1 Pet. iv. 19. This is a thing not enough understood, the obligation that lies upon us to own God more frequently and solemnly, under the notion of our Creator. We think the notion wherein we should own him, more to be that of a Father, and as in Christ he hath been a Redeemer to us; but these things are not to exclude one another by any means. It is very true indeed, that all the interest we had in him as Creator, was lost and forfeited by the apostacy: but that matter being, by the Redeemer, made up between him and all those that, in the Redeemer, accept him and take him for their God, we are not now to think his Creatorship is to be absorbed and swallowed up in any other supervening notion, by any means. We are now, by redeeming grace and mercy, brought to that state and pass, that we may own him comfortably as a Creator again. So that whereas we had lost all right and interest in him as such, by our apostacy; a restitution being made, now we are to commit ourselves to him, as a faithful Creator. Faithfulness hath reference to a promise, and a covenant. We are to commit ourselves now to him as a Creator, under obligation. There was a covenant made at first, between himself and his innocent creature; that covenant was broken by the apostacy; so that he could be challenged upon faithfulness no longer. But now, that matter being composed and made up by the Redeemer, by a Mediator, there is a new covenant made, and now faithfulness hath place in reference to him as a Creator, and we are to own him as such, and trust in him, and commit ourselves to him as such. And,

5. You should hereupon cease from solicitude about the issue of things in reference to yourselves, or in reference to the whole community that you profess to be of, even that people that he hath in this world. Solicitude should cease about private and more public concerns; you should reckon that yourselves and all things are in the best hands in which they could lie, or into which they could be put. In reference to things that relate to yourselves, you have committed yourselves to him, devoted yourselves, intrusted yourselves to him upon invitation; not presumptuously, but as being warranted and encouraged by himself. Then it is a wrong to him to be anxious what he will do with you. What! will he not show mercy to the soul he hath made? Indeed, his having made it, if there be no expiation of sin, would have availed nothing; for there is a case when "he that made them would not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour," Isa. xxvii. 11.

That is, when they are in rebellion against him and will not be reconciled to him; but when a reconciliation is brought about, and you have surrendered to him the soul that he hath made, it is a great iniquity and wrong to him to suppose, that he will not now deal with you as a faithful Creator. Therefore, though now you know your soul is lodged in flesh, and within a little while this mortal frame must drop in pieces and fall into the dust, yet never be solicitous what he will do with your soul, or what will become of it after all: you do betrust, you have committed it to him, who is the most absolutely perfect God, and the most absolutely perfect Being. All things that he hath made demonstrate him to be so; and who would be afraid to let his soul rest in the midst of infinite, immense goodness? "His soul shall dwell at ease;" as it is said of one that fears God, but very faintly, and beneath the significancy of that expression, it is rendered, Psalm xxv. 13. "His soul shall dwell in goodness (that is the expression) who feareth God," shall take up its rest, sweet and pleasant rest, as men are wont to do at night. Who would be solicitous when he is to commit and put his soul into the midst of immense and boundless goodness, as his must be who is the Author of all made things? for they all spring from goodness, goodness that would diffuse itself and flow arbitrarily and freely in such a creation as this. And,

6. Live more adoring lives. Let us labour to habituate ourselves, our spirits, more to adoration, seeing the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, are continually seen in things that are made. Let that sentence be engraven as a motto upon each of our hearts, and inwrought into our souls; "Come, let us worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker." Let every thing that serves to put us in mind of him, prompt us immediately to worship and bow down the head before him, upon such apprehensions of God, such demonstrations of his love, of his power, and goodness, and greatness, as offer themselves to our view. Let us presently bow and worship, take notice and adore.

7. Let us subject ourselves most absolutely to his government, both legal and providential. Doth it not belong to him to give laws to his creatures that are capable of government by law, that have been entirely and wholly made by him? Should not he give laws, even to our minds and to our spirits, and lay them under the obligation of his laws? This is sure the most reasonable thing in the world. Why should he not prescribe to my mind, who is himself an unmade mind, while mine is but a made mind? Why should not he prescribe to me how my spirit should work this way or that, while he is an eternal Spirit and Mind? My spirit that sprung from him, why should not he direct it, even by a law, how to think, how to dispose of my thoughts this way and that, when he hath given me a power to think? Why should I not use my apprehensive

power and knowledge for him from whom I received it? He that knows my mould and frame, and hath given me that intelligent spirit that I have, shall I not keep it in perpetual subjection to him, receive laws from his mouth, never think myself at liberty, and in an indifferency to use my thoughts as I will, and let out my affections as I will; but all under his law? And then, as to his providential government, shall not he do what he will with his creatures, with the thing that he hath made? How reasonable is it, how just towards him and how good for itself to be subject to him! Then I am quiet if I can live under his government, to be disposed of by him as he pleaseth; otherwise there is a continual war between him and me and so a continual war between me and myself; affection against conscience, passion against judgment; for there will always be something in me as long as I live, as long as I have a reasonable intelligent being, that will take the part of God against unreasonable rebellious passions, and shall be a self-judged creature before him in his sight. And,

8. Lastly, Let us always propound him to ourselves as the object of our religion; and take pleasure in the thought of this, that we have found out an object of religion, which we have revealed to us, that he hath himself revealed to us himself as the great and only object of religion; the one indisputable One, so as no controversy remains now concerning it. And whereas, it is the business of all religion, to pay all duty to God, and expect and seek all relief and felicity from him, let us demean ourselves towards him accordingly. And consider with ourselves, that in making his mind known to us, giving us to know himself, he hath given us to know ourselves also, so as to understand that being creatures, made things, we are made for another. That which cannot be by itself, must not be for itself; what more reasonable thing in all the world? Therefore, our business must be with him as the final, ultimate, animative object of our religion; and that designing duty to him and felicity to ourselves, we have to do with him as the object of religion under that twofold notion, as one that we are to glorify, and as one whom we are to enjoy for ever. And this now shows us much of ourselves. That is, showing us what our nature and state are, it shows us what our end of business must be, and that it is a very great thing. And this is, we must understand, what we were made for. And this being the first head of Christian religion, (indeed of all religion,) it resolves the first question that every one is concerned to make to himself: What was I made for? What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and to enjoy him; to pay all duty to him, and to expect all felicity and blessedness from him; and to seek it. It is thus only that you can come to know what you are here in this world for; and it were a lamentable case, to know the several powers and faculties that belong to our natures, and not to know what all these are for. To know I am such a creature, of such a mould and frame, and not to know what these are made for! This would be a very sad consideration to a serious and considering mind, if it were not to be collected and found out what they were made for. As if one that never saw a watch in his life before he finds it by casualty and chance, and sees a great deal of curiosity in the workmanship, yet cannot imagine what it is intended for, what it was made for; it stands still, and he knows not how to set it going, or if he did, he doth not understand the use of it. Here is the case with an intelligent creature, a man if he should contemplate himself, and not contemplate his Maker, his end. Here I have a strange kind of being, I have a body, and I have a soul inhabiting that body; but I do not know why such a creature as I came to have a place in the world, why I have such a being, what I am to do, and what I was made for. But now by this you come to know what it is you were made for. If you know you have a Maker, you must know you were made for him, to glorify him and to enjoy him for ever: and it is a great thing to have made this step; when we have taken notice of our own faculties and powers, and what our structure and frame are. Now to know whose we are, what satisfaction is it to the mind of man! to know this, that I am made to glorify and enjoy him that made me. But when you come to be at a loss, (as all in the fallen state are,) "what course shall I take to glorify and enjoy God?" Why, we that are here wandering in such a wilderness as we are in, and so benighted, so bemisted as we are; if we have no instruction, no guidance, no rule, we are at a sad loss. Therefore it is the greatest joy in the world to a considering mind to have it plainly evidenced to him, that there is a discovery come forth from God, suitable to the forlorn state of the creature, a word from heaven, a written word that he himself hath delivered down to us, to teach us how we are to glorify him, and how we are to enjoy him—which will be the next thing we shall come unto.

LECTURE VII.*

2 Tim. iii. 16.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

You have had an Object of religion, the only competent and deserving Object, (I hope,) with some efficacy presented to you; an absolute perfect Being, an eternal infinite Mind or Spirit, self-existing and unmade; demonstrating himself to be so, by the things that are made. And now the business of that religion that is to be exercised towards such an Object, (the glorious and blessed God,) is continually to render to him a due homage, and to expect from him blessedness for our own souls. Religion stands in serious endeavours, (as the learners among us are taught to speak and understand,) "to glorify God and enjoy him for ever." Under this twofold notion, we are to go and act towards him as our chief end; as one to whom we owe all the duty we are capable of performing, and by performing whereof we glorify him; and from whom only we must expect all the felicity we are capable of partaking of, and in the participation whereof we enjoy him; so we are to consider and move towards God as our end, in such a motion of heart and spirit. This is present religion, that is, the religion of our present state. The religion of the way, (as it is called,) or the religion of *viatores*; those that are travelling, and yet short of their final perfection. And therefore is the whole of that religion, to wit, the religion of the present state, in contra-distinction to that of the eternal state, expressed by a term that denotes continual motion; that is, a coming to God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." We are to be continually in this motion all the while we are in this world; coming to God. In order whereto that great fundamental is to be forelaid—the belief that God is; as that which is prerequisite, upon which we have been insisting already. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But now, whosoever have it in design thus to come to God, and move towards him, they will find that they need a rule to guide those motions by which they may direct and steer their course: there is no coming to God but as he is pleased to render himself accessible, but as he will be approached; and therefore our religion, which consists in this motion, in this coming to God, cannot be a self-devised thing, or an invention of our own: we cannot come to God as we please, but as he pleases, as he will have us come: we can never glorify him, but by doing his will, nor can we ever come to enjoy him but by compliance therewith. Therefore, this must of course be the next inquiry, with any considering person, any one that doth seriously design to do any thing in the business of religion; "What course shall I take to know God's will, concerning my approach, my coming, my tending towards him through the whole course of my life in this world?" It is a very rational inquiry, and that which the exigency of the case must urge every one to, that doth intend seriously and in good earnest to be religious. For admit, that there be internal principles, from the very reason and nature of things, truth and falsehood, good and evil, right and wrong, yet besides that such as are needful are taken into the constitution, or among

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the determinations, of the Divine will, so there are other things superadded with respect to the varied state of our case: and it is the Divine will that doth determine and constitute what we shall do in this cause of our motion towards him, and consequently what shall be required of us to believe and know that we may so do: and so we do need a signification of his will concerning our faith, and concerning our practice. Though it is true, that the determinations of his will are not (as to the most principal things that do concern us) arbitrary, but they are determinations of his will, according to most excellent wisdom, most perfect judgment, and counsel, for he "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will;" and so doth will such things concerning us, and in reference to us, as the state of our case doth require and need, and without which there could be no commerce restored, and brought about between him and us. And now, whatsoever will express and signify to us the Divine will about such things as will be our fit and useful rule to guide our motion towards God as our end, we are to seek after. And concerning this, the inquiry must needs be made by every serious person; "What is there that I may look upon, as such a sufficient signification to me, of the Divine will touching my great concernments with him?" Now we have a book among us, that calls itself, and is commonly styled, THE WORD OF GOD. This very book, if it be not the word of God, truly, to call it so, and to attempt and endeavour to spread it as such, is one of the boldest cheats that ever was attempted to be put upon the sons of men. But if really and truly it be so, then it doth our business: you find it doth so, by looking into it; for this is the business it doth profess, and the intent which it doth own and avow, to acquaint us with the Divine will and pleasure in order to our serving and glorifying him, and being finally happy and blessed with him. If it be his will indeed, it will most undoubtedly serve for this end and purpose; that being all the end that professedly it hath to serve. Nothing can so well serve this purpose as his word, if there be such a word: for who can so well tell us what God's will is, as he himself? Sure he best knows his own mind, and what judgment he hath made of things, and which (after him) he will have us to make, in order to our practice.

I might (indeed) have driven the inquiry a great deal further into the principles of religion, upon a merely rational ground, or according to the ducture of natural light; as it was necessary to be done, upon what hath been done already, in representing and evidencing to you an object of religion: which was necessary first to be proved, before we could with any colour of reason go about to assert the divine authority of this book. It would have been a very absurd thing to go about to prove from this book, the authority of it, that there was such a thing, when he which should give that authority, and from whom that authority should be derived, should be unknown to us; or it should be a matter of doubt with any, whether there was such a one, yea or no. But that being once proved and out of question, now it comes in the proper and natural method, and next of course, to be considered: Is there such a revelation from this God, as this book doth pretend to? hath it really that divine stamp upon it from him, which by those who do profess and own themselves Christians, it is apprehended to have? And if that can be found, it supersedes any need of following the line of natural light (as such) further; because there is nothing more now to be discovered that way, which is not more clearly and fully contained in this book. And therefore all other things that might be referred thither, I shall rather satisfy myself to deduce and insist upon as they come in our way from thence. In order whereto, our first business must be to assert the authority of them. And for that purpose it is I have pitched upon this passage of Scripture, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." All Scripture is θεοπνευστος. It is only that one word that is said of it; *God-breathed*. All Scripture is (as it were) the breath of God. That indeed is the very literal sense of the word here used, *breathed from God*.

And so the words are a formed proposition to our hands, we need not vary them in any other phrase, but take them as they lie. Our business must be to assert, from them,—

The Divine Authority of the Scriptures. In order whereto, I shall premise,

First, That I design not herein to meddle with divers lesser collateral questions, as touching the Hebrew points, and Hebrew translations, the various readings, etymological and other differences, which are things much fitter for the schools than for the pulpit. And therefore,

Secondly, My main design must be to evince to you, that this book doth contain in it a sufficient revelation of the Divine mind and will, touching what we are to believe and do in order to our glorifying God as our supreme Lord, and our enjoying him, and being happy in him, as our best and only satisfying good. And in order hereunto, the course that will be fittest to take, will in short be this—To state the subject to you that is spoken of under the name of Scriptures, with its universality, "*all* Scripture:" and then—To prove to you from that subject, the thing affirmed of it, that it is God-breathed, that it is inspired from God, or (which is all one) that it is of divine authority, and that God is the author of it.

I. For the stating of the subject here spoken of, Scripture, with a universal term, "*all* Scripture;" that universal term cannot be absolutely universal, (as you may be sure,) cannot signify all writing. Every writing cannot be pretended to be God-breathed, or of divine inspiration; therefore the limitation of this universal term is to be taken from the immediately foregoing words, "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures." It is therefore holy Scripture that is here spoken of. All holy Scripture, the whole of that which is called holy Scripture; it is of divine inspiration. Well, what is that, that is here called holy Scripture? Undoubtedly it must be that which in those days was immediately known by the name of the Scripture, and many times the Scriptures; nothing was more familiar with our Saviour, when he was conversant here on earth, than to speak of this book by the name of Scripture, and sometimes the Scriptures, as being so in the most famous and eminent sense, according to the account that went of that part of them, among the Jews, of whom he was one, and among whom he conversed. Every one knew none could be ignorant what was meant by the Scriptures at that time, or in those days: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life," (saith our Saviour, John v. 39.) And this and that was done (as you often find in the evangelist historians) that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And the Scripture cannot be broken, saith our Lord, in one of his contests with the Jews, John x. 35. Now it is very evident here,

1. Therefore, by the Scriptures, that is, holy Scriptures, (as the apostle's words in this place do expound themselves,) must be meant the books of the Old Testament. That (I say) in the first place must be meant by it, which then by universal consent among that people, went under the name or notion of the Scriptures. That is, those books of the Old Testament which go with us at this day under that notion, and come into that censure and account, without the apocryphal books which never came into that account among the Jews, and therefore are justly left out of that account with us. They never took them. The ancient Christians did not take them into that account at all, nor the Jews before our Saviour's time, or at any time: they were not written in the Hebrew tongue (unless some little parts) as the books of the Old Testament were; and have many things very fabulous in them, that show them to have proceeded from human authority; though divers of them (some of those books at least) proceeded from very pious writers. After that, the full compute of these books of the Old Testament was gathered up and digested by Ezra since the captivity. It was very plain the Jews never took any writing into the account of canonical Scriptures from the time they took in the prophecy of Malachi; never after that, did they add any thing to the sacred canon, and so much we find Josephus against Apion most expressly to tell us. And therefore the apocryphal writings could be none of the books that went under the name of the Scriptures here, when the apostle saith, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God:" nor indeed, did they come into that account in the Christian church in the purest times. The account that is given us of the Scriptures by Origen and Athanasius leaves these books quite excluded: though

e have an account too in ancient records of some use ade of them as certain ecclesiastical books, but not as e holy Scriptures; they were not accounted the holy oks. That then is part of this subject here to be spoken , when it is said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration God," that is, the books of the Old Testament, which as the Scripture in the eminent sense at that time. ut,

2. There comes within the compass of this subject too, e books of the New Testament. For we must consider, bout what time this was written by the apostle to Timoy: this was the second epistle you see; and that was ost certainly written a considerable time after the greatt part of the New Testament was written. You may take otice in the next chapter, (2 Tim. iv. 6.) that he speaks f the time of his departure being near at hand. He had nce appeared before Nero already, and we are told that is was written near about the time of his appearance bere Nero the second time: so we have it in the conclusion f this epistle, that is, in the adjunct to it. And though ose subjoined adjuncts to the epistles are not always of nquestionable authority, yet the matter of this epistle eading so much thereto, it puts this thing out of doubt at this was written very near the close of the apostle's fe; "I am ready to be offered," saith he, "and the time f my departure is at hand." Now it is evident that all e Gospels were written a considerable time before this. The last of them, undoubtedly, was the Gospel of John, nd that he is supposed to have wrote about the eighth ear of Nero, whereas the apostle suffered (as we are told y history) in the last year of Nero, about seven years aferwards. So that in all likelihood this was the last, or ast save one, that he wrote of his epistles; Paul here peaking of the time of his departure as near at hand: and e find that what was written by him, is elsewhere referred to, under the name of Scripture: as by the apostle Peter, (2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.) where he speaks of his "beloved rother Paul" who had "many things in him hard to be nderstood, which," saith he, "ignorant and unstable inds wrest, as they do other scriptures, to their own detruction:" and we find the apostle James, in his 4th chap. th ver. refers, under the name of Scripture, to another assage of his, "The spirit in us" (as saith the Scripture) lusteth to envy." You find nothing any where to answer his but that Gal. v. 17. There, having spoken of envy, articularly before, he addeth, "the flesh lusteth against he spirit." And whatsoever was to come within that chaacter and sacred stamp must come within the compass of his subject too. The book of the revelation plainly shows t was written by the apostle John when he was in Patnos: and after his return from thence, history informs us, hat upon the request of the Asiatic churches, he did colect and gather together and put into order all the books of he New Testament, and so (as it were) did seal up the anon. And a considerable time after that, we are inormed of his taking a journey to ——[a] on purpose to collect the Sacred Writings he found among the churches here, with whom he conversed: and he there found the books punctually as we have them, and in the same order wherein they now stand in our Bibles. And in the fourth century, they were all recognized by the council of the Laodiceans. Therefore at this time, when this epistle to Timothy was written, there must be understood to be a reference had to all the books of the New Testament already written, and any to be written by inspiration of the same Spirit. And so this makes up together the subject here spoken of, when it is said, "All Scripture," all holy Scripture, "is given by inspiration of God." All God-breathed, as it were,) breathed from heaven, the issue of divine breath, for those great and glorious purposes that it was o serve in this world. And now,

II. We come to prove the thing affirmed concerning his subject—that these Scriptures were inspired from heaven, by God himself, or are of divine authority; which is he import of this assertion, as to the way of God's communicating his mind to those that delivered them. The expression is large and extensive enough to comprehend any, wherein there might be a certain signification of the Divine will; whether he did communicate it by voice, (as he did divers things we find upon record in Scripture,) or whether it was by dream, or by vision, to the penman, that is, asleep or waking; or whether it were (as the Jews distinguish) by immediate irradiation of the intellect, the understanding faculty; or whether it were by impression or signature upon the imagination or fancy, as a thing intervening between the Divine mind and the intellect: which way soever it was, the expression will reach it. It was of divine authority; it proceeded from him, be it one or the other of these ways. And in order to the evincing of this by argumentation, I shall briefly say somewhat to justify the undertaking, of proving the divine authority of these Scriptures by that argumentative way; and then shall proceed to the proof thereof, in that way which the case itself doth best admit of.

1. Something may be needful to be said to justify the undertaking to prove the divine authority of these writings, in a way of argumentation. In order to it, do but note these two things.

(1.) That undoubtedly there can be no effectual believing of the things contained in the Scriptures unto salvation, without the special operation of the Divine Spirit. It is only the Spirit that makes the sanctifying impression of these Scriptures upon the soul. The apostle expresses his great thankfulness to God, on the behalf of the Thessalonian churches, (2 Thess. ii. 13.) that "God had chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." There is no sanctifying belief of that truth but by the Divine Spirit; that is out of all question: "Sanctify them by the truth, thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. "Do thou sanctify them by it: the sanctifying them by this truth, or by the truth of this word of thine, must be thine own work." There is that vicious prejudice in the minds of men, against the design and tendency of all sacred truth and that power of corrupt inclination to comply and comport therewith, that it must be a great power that must overcome; and none is great enough that is inferior to the power of the Almighty Spirit. It is by a certain spirit of faith in the soul that men do believe to the saving of their souls. "We, having the same spirit of faith, believe and therefore speak." There is none can arrive to this belief, a divine belief of the Scriptures, without the operation of that Spirit. This very notion, in general, that the Scriptures are the word of God, is a dead, and insipid, and ineffectual thing: as all other notions of truth comprehended in that general are also. But,

(2.) I must add, that the operations of the Divine Spirit are not necessary to bring men under an obligation, or to make it become their duty to believe the Scriptures to be God's word, or of divine authority: which therefore certainly doth infer, that there is a way of proving this by argument, that these Scriptures are of divine authority, so as to hold men under an obligation to believe them to be God's word; that it becomes their duty to believe them so, so that they are culpable if they do not, if that light that may shine into them that way about this matter be not received and comported with accordingly. And to evidence this briefly to you, do but consider these things:

[1.] If there be not enough to be said by way of argument to prove the divine authority of this sacred book, without the special immediate operation of the Divine Spirit, then every one that hath not the operation of the Divine Spirit, would be innocently an unbeliever under the Gospel. Then it would be an innocent thing to be an infidel under the Gospel, notwithstanding the clearest light that can be supposed to shine amongst us, supposing only the absence of the special influence of the Divine Spirit: and then the mere retraction or withholding of that influence, would be enough to justify the infidel, and to make him therefore not guilty of a crime in his infidelity, barely because he hath not that Spirit; than which, nothing can be supposed more absurd or more prejudicial to the Christian cause and interest.

[2.] This is to be considered too, (to the same purpose,) that if the special operations of the Spirit were necessary to make it become a man's duty to believe these Scrip-

a This is blank in the manuscript: and after examining every document to which he could gain access, the editor has not been able to ascertain the place alluded to, nor the authority on which the author states this circumstance. The fact, it must be admitted, is extremely doubtful.

tures to be the word of God, then they must be necessary in reference to every particular thing which he shall be bound to believe. But you know, the whole is made up of all the parts: and when we speak especially of the necessary parts, it is plain, that if the operation of the Holy Ghost be necessary to make it a man's duty to believe these Scriptures, it must be necessary in order to his believing every more principal part, every sentence that doth more immediately and directly concern the salvation of his soul; and then upon that supposition, every person that should be under an obligation to believe these Scriptures to be the word of God, must himself be an inspired person or a prophet. And then, this would be the consequence, that these Scriptures would be of no use at all, one way or another; not to them that have the Spirit of faith to enable them to believe them; because every thing that is contained in them, and necessary for the end for which they are written, must be supposed to be suggested and dictated to them by that Spirit, and therefore the believer would have no need of the Scripture; and to the unbeliever they would be of no use at all, because while the Spirit doth not give his influence to make them believe, they (upon this supposition) never could believe. And therefore, consequently, the Scriptures would be of no use, do no good, either to believer or unbeliever. And therefore, as I have asserted in the first place, that there can be no effectual believing of these Scriptures unto salvation, without the sanctifying influence of the Divine Spirit, so I further do assert, that such an influence of the Divine Spirit, is not necessary to make it become a man's duty to believe these Scriptures; but it will be his duty to believe them upon such light about this matter, as may in an argumentative way be supplied and furnished unto any that will make it their business attentively to consider. And now,

2. In the second place, I shall proceed to tell you in what way this proof must be attempted and undertaken, that is, inasmuch as the subject here, Scripture, all Scripture, is so complete as you have heard; that is, is made up of the books of the Old Testament and the New. The method that is reasonable to be taken, is to endeavour to evince these two things to you,—that there were Scriptures in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, and many of them a great while before, which were certainly of divine authority: and—that the books which we now have among us, in our time and in our hands, are the self-same books, in substance, (without any material corruption or alteration,) that those were, which went for the holy Scriptures, of divine authority at that time. These are the two things that are to be evinced and made out to you, and with such evidence as may leave little ground or pretence of cavil to the understanding and honest Christian: which I doubt not (through the blessing of God) may be done.

LECTURE VIII.*

(1.) Now to prove that these books in the days of our Saviour and his apostles, even unto the last of them, went into the account of those Scriptures that were of divine authority; and within this compass must come the books of the Old and New Testament; we shall give some considerations in reference to this; and shall afterwards, in the close of all, (having spoken to the latter proposition too,) give you some additional considerations concerning this book as now we find it.

[1.] For the divine authority of the books of the Old Testament, I shall not trouble you here with the various divisions that the Jews made of these books. And here whereas they reckon no more of them than there were letters of their alphabet, two and twenty, which most apparently excludes the apocryphal books. It would be tedious and trifling to trouble you with the account how they did severally refer all those to the several letters; only it is plain that the minor prophets they made all but one book. But this division only will serve our turn, (though they did not strictly hold to it, but varied from it commonly, making a third member which we find no mention made of in the evangelists, or the writings of the New Testament,) that is, the division of the books of the Old Testament into those of Moses and the prophets. The Jews indeed made the Hagiographia, or third class, that is, accounting none prophetic, but those which were sent by special mission from God. And so all those books (besides the five books of Moses, and those written by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets) they called Hagiographia, that is, other holy writings, sacred writings; such as the historical parts of Scripture, the books of Job, Proverbs, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and the like. But our Saviour comprehends all under the name of the law and the prophets, or sometimes, Moses and the prophets; (Matt. xxii. 40.) "On these two hang all the law and the prophets:" and that other place, (Luke xvi. 29.) "They have Moses and the prophets." Now take here the books of Moses first, and there can be no doubt at all but he was an inspired person, and that his books were written by very peculiar inspiration. If you do but admit the truth of the historical relation, as to him, and that people he had the conduct of, I say, supposing that there can be no doubt of his having written those books by special inspiration of God, for (admitting the truth of the history) you find how familiarly conversant he was with God, from time to time; that he did nothing of any concernment in reference to that people, but always by divine monition. Nothing then is more unsupposable than that he should do so great a thing as this, digest such records, and stamp them with the name of sacred and divine, and call them the word of the Lord, and the law of the Lord; and all this, without special instinct from God. Do but think how manifest and observable and adorable a Divine presence showed himself to that person. How peculiarly God took him nigh to himself, sustained him forty days and forty nights together, (whether once or twice I will not here dispute,) in the sacred mount, by miracle; supporting him by his own glory, speaking to him from time to time, giving him free recourse to him, directing him to consult him, and take his responses from him, upon all occasions. And that the history that relates to him, as to the matter of fact, must be true beyond all exception, is evident if you consider such things as these;

First, The very honourable mention that is made of this Moses, and some of the most remarkable things relating to that people (the Jews) whom he had the conduct of, by some of the most ancient and celebrated pagan writers, magnifying him as a most wise and prudent legislator, and a very great man; and remarking very considerable things with reference to this people. I need not trouble you with them; it is known to scholars, what of this kind is written by Diodorus Siculus and others. And,

Secondly, That which is above all demonstration: it is notorious to all the world that the people of the Jews were under the government of a Theocracy for several centuries of years successively, which puts the matter out of all doubt, that the history of that fact must be unquestionable upon which they became so. They were continually directed by God himself; their laws were made by God himself. He appointed the means of being consulted in every place, and it was through a long-continued series of time; and so these records in all that time were known to be sacred things, having a divine stamp all along upon them. And again,

Thirdly, It is to be considered that the very matter of the history itself (considered in its circumstances) doth speak its own truth; considered, I say, in its circumstances, that is, the bringing of the people of Israel out of Egypt, and bringing them out by so strong a hand, inflicting so many miraculous plagues upon that Egyptian people, and their prince, till they were forced to a manumission of them; the dividing of the Red Sea, the most stupendous way of giving the law upon mount Sinai, which (with the additional precepts that were given to Moses in the mount itself) make up (you know) the most considerable parts of the Pentateuch. The very matter of itself speaks, (if you consider it clothed with its circumstances,) that there could be no fiction as to these things!

* Preached January 16th, 1691.

for there is nobody but must grant, upon an ordinary view and judgment of those characters that do appear of Moses, that he was a prudent man at least, a very prudent man. But certainly he must needs be a madman that would report a fiction of things said to be done by, and before, six hundred thousand men. When men do feign and forge things, they do it with the greatest privacy imaginable. As the portentous stories about Mahomet, there are no witnesses quoted, but all goes upon the credit of his word. It is not said, there were such and such thousands that saw such and such things, for then, if it were false, it were the easiest thing in the world to be disproved. Now when the law is said to be given from such a mount, clothed with so terrible and august a glory at that time, and the voice heard uttering those ten words, as they are called, by six hundred thousand men, at once, besides women and children, (for these words are said to be heard spoken from the mount, by all the people; whereupon they could not bear that God should speak to them any longer. "We die," say they to Moses, "if God speak to us any more, but do thou speak and we will hear,") no man that hath but the ordinary understanding of a man, can think, that one of common prudence would inform of things that he saith were done in view of so many thousands of witnesses, if they were not done; if there were any design in saying so, that design were presently blasted, and lost out of hand; especially if it be considered that among those ten words there are so express precepts against idolatry; and that people had so marvellous propensions to idolatry, as their frequent relapses into it, and their running into it, even in Moses' absence, when God ceased to speak with an audible voice, do testify. It had given them the most gladsome opportunity they could have wished for, could they have detected a fraud in the case. When it is said there were such and such, and so many thousand witnesses, they could have said, there was no such thing. Could not this have been transmitted to posterity for a notorious cheat, by a people so prone to idolatry as they were? And when they were urged by the prophets (in a time of great degeneracy) with the authority of the divine law, how easily could they have replied, "No, there was no such law, it was a fiction; and what is said to be given by God's voice, and our fathers are said to be quoted as witnesses to, they all renounced it, said there was no such thing!" And then,

Fourthly, That holy men succeeding this time, (and unto whose inspiration it hath been sufficiently attested, as we shall see afterwards,) did attest unto Moses, still calling that law written by him, the law of the Lord, and the word of the Lord, and the testimonies and statutes of the Lord. With what reverence and with what delight and complacency do you find them so mentioned in the book of Psalms, in multitudes of places, when there was little else of Scripture yet extant, besides those books of Moses! Would such a man as David with adoration have called these writings, the law of the Lord, and the word, and statutes, and judgments, and testimonies of the Lord, if they had not been most certainly so? And would he have expressed so high delight in them, and veneration for them as such, counting them more precious than thousands of gold and silver, and expressing the heart-breakings and longings of his soul after them from time to time upon all occasions? And then, for what was written by him (David) and other holy men, (besides the prophets,) though it is not known who wrote every book, yet there is no doubt but all may (as our Saviour did design they should) be comprehended under the name of the prophets; Moses and the prophets. And for the prophets, that they were reckoned prophets speaks their inspiration; the distinguishing character of true prophets and false, being so well known among that people. And for the things themselves that they prophesied, the accomplished events did from time to time prove the inspiration of the prophets.

But then take the whole Old Testament together, and that hath received its confirmation abundantly from the New? so that if the New can be proved to be of divine authority, all our business is done, the matter is out of question. The whole Old Testament, it is most expressly owned and proved by the New. For,

What is the New Testament, but a commentary upon the Old: it is an application of the religion of the Old Testament. The Old was nothing but a veiled Gospel. The New is nothing else but the same Gospel unveiled. And again,

It is plain, that our Lord himself doth frequently and expressly confirm to us the whole Old Testament, taken together under the name of Scripture, or the Scriptures, Moses and the prophets, and the law and the prophets. As when he saith, "I am not come to destroy the law; no, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil;" (Matt. v. 17.) and in the next verse, "Heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or one tittle of the law pass"—so that he hath confirmed the whole Old Testament to a tittle, to a very tittle, not one title but is sacred, it cannot be lost, cannot pass away, it is a more stable thing than heaven itself, and therefore now,

[2.] We pass to the books of the New Testament. And how will it appear that there were such books written by divine inspiration, so as we ought to reckon the authority of them is stampt thereon by God himself? Why,

First, Much of what we find in these writings was delivered by our Lord himself. The most material things contained in the Gospels, that is, the doctrinal parts, were his own words still from time to time, upon all occasions.

Secondly, It is very plain that he did inspire his apostles, that were to be witnesses of him, and whose business it must be to be planters and propagators of the Christian faith afterwards in the world. He did purposely inspire and direct and authorize them to publish those very things that make up the substance of those books; and therefore, no doubt, did direct them to write those very books themselves; for who can suppose, he having a design that the Christian religion should obtain and take place in all succeeding times to the end of time, but that he should intend that it should be wrote, it should be put into writing; and therefore when he laid that charge upon his apostles, upon whom he breathed at parting, or a little before, saying "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and to whom he gave this charge, "Go and teach all nations this doctrine;" certainly within the compass of that charge must be comprehended the charge of writing these things, as one means of publishing them to all nations, and so necessary a means, as that all besides (as to succeeding ages) must be ineffectual. And then,

Thirdly, For the authority of what was contained in these books, or the divinity thereof, he did endow those he made use of, as his apostles and first planters of the Christian faith after him, (even their very inspiration itself, their very mission, as well as the several parts of that message upon which they were sent,) with a power of working stupendous miraculous works; that it might be seen by all men, that a Divine power did attest to divine truth, as it was published by those men. And upon this you find that mighty stress laid, that these first propagators of the Christian faith "preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." And the same Holy Ghost that did assist in preaching, did prompt too, to write the whole New Testament. And that it was the Holy Ghost that did actuate them in all this, was shown by that power of working miraculous works, which God gave at the same time; because the Holy Ghost is entitled to those works by our Saviour himself, saying, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you," then is that religion true, and it is the kingdom of God that I am here setting up among you, and hereupon is that great weight laid upon this matter, (Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4.) "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation: which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" This was the divine seal, the seal of heaven affixed to these writings and what was contained in them; that is, that when men should come abroad upon such an errand, into strange countries and other nations besides their own, and speak

things that such and such people had never heard of before, hereupon, suppose it should be inquired of them, "What shall induce us to believe, that what you say is true and comes from God?" Why, immediately they do such and such works that could only be done by Divine power, and so they testify to men, that this was a divine truth that they uttered to them. They preached such a Gospel, and at the same time they healed the sick, by the speaking of a word, and sometimes raised the dead to life; as our Saviour himself did, who had so confirmed the truth before, by that and other most wonderful things that referred to his own person, by his death especially, and by his resurrection. Here was the greatest question among the Jews; he gave himself out to be the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God; all the question was, "Is this the Christ, or is he a deceiver or impostor?" He must be one of the two; either the Christ as he said he was, or one of the most notorious impostors that ever was upon the face of the earth: all the dispute rested upon this one thing; "Whereas, he gave himself out to be the Son of God, is he the Son of God or no?" The means by which many were wrought upon before his death, to believe in him, were his most miraculous works; but I say they were but the means; and to bring any effectually to believe in Christ, there must be something more than external means. When he preached to the multitude, he confirmed his word, sometimes by feeding thousands by very unproportionable means; by healing the sick, by opening the ears of the deaf and the eyes of the blind, loosening the tongues of the dumb, and raising up the dead to life and the like; and when at length he came to die, you know with what circumstances his death was accompanied; all the powers of heaven and earth were shaken, the sun withdrew his head, the veil of the temple was rent, the dead arose; and a poor pagan centurion, (who was appointed to guard the execution,) upon the sight of these things gives up the cause; "Verily this was the Son of God, I see he was in the right, the Jews persecuted him wrongfully," (for here was the question between them, Was he the Son of God or no?) "They crucified him for a blasphemer, in saying he was the Son of God, which they denied him to be, but now I see he was the Son of God." And he was afterwards "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness by which he was raised from the dead." Now his apostles going forth, in the authority of this Divine person, to testify nothing but what they saw with their eyes, and what they heard with their ears, and being appointed by him to be witnesses of what they saw and heard, and to preach the doctrine which he had preached and delivered to them before; and they themselves working so miraculous works to prove the truth of what he did assert; this proves the matter out of all question, that what was written concerning all this, must be by divine inspiration. And further too,

Fourthly, It manifestly appears how the prophecies of the Old Testament (the greatest and most important of them) did receive their confirmation that they were divine, by the events that fell out in the time wherein the books of the New Testament were written, and which came to be reflected on afterwards, by the wisest and most considering, the ablest and most competent, judges the world had in those days. Many of them were hereupon converted to the Christian faith; and some others that were not so, merely as wanting that opportunity to be informed of matters of fact which the others had had, who yet did acknowledge the convictiveness of the Mediator; as for instance, those prophecies concerning Christ, and that one express one, among the rest, of Daniel, about the seventy weeks; that great pagan, (and one of the most considerable enemies for reason and learning that ever the Christian cause had in the world) Porphyry, having opportunity to view over this prophecy, said it must needs have been written after the event, it was so very punctual. So that he only wanted an opportunity to know, that this prophecy had been written above five hundred years before his time, and was four hundred and twenty years before its accomplishment in the hands of the Jews, and kept so safe that it was impossible to be a fallacious thing. And therefore, that being his case, (he being a heathen and not a Jew, and not having opportunity to know,) that must (by his own confession) be the only reason of his not being a believer, upon that one single prophecy, so punctually accomplished by the coming of our Lord; and his being cut off at such a time as the prophecy did say concerning the coming of the Messiah, the Prince, and that he was to be cut off at such a time. Well, upon all this there is little doubt to be made as to the *first proposition*, that is,—that those books that went under the name of Scripture, or the Scriptures, in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, to the last survivor of them, were certainly of divine authority.

(2.) But now to the second proposition—that this book that we have now in our hands, containing such and such writings in it, is the same, or those Scriptures are the very same that were so owned and acknowledged for the Scripture, in those days. It may be said, and no doubt will be, by any that shall consider, that if this be out of question, the whole business is out of question; for nobody can think, if all that hath been said be true, about these books of the Old and New Testament, (said to be extant together at least within the time of the evangelist John,) as to matter of fact, as was reported, but these books must unquestionably be of divine authority. But how should we do to know that we have the matter of fact rightly deduced and drawn down to us, and so that we have reason to believe the books that we now have are the same? If we could be sure they are the same, it would be unquestionable; now as to that, there is one thing that I must premise to you, and it carries its own evidence with it. That is, that that knowledge that men may have of any thing by ordinary means, we are never to expect should be given us by extraordinary. Pray do but take this, and weigh it well, as a thing needful here to be forelaid. Whatsoever may be sufficiently evidenced by ordinary means, it is very unreasonable to expect, that God should afford extraordinary means for the evidencing of that thing. If you do but observe the constancy of his methods of government, over this world, how sparing he hath been of doing extraordinary things, that ought to come by just account into the class of miracles, of miraculous works, you would see, that the Divine wisdom and power have been always very sparing of doing such things, unless where the exigency of the case did require it, and where the end was not otherwise attainable. But it is foolish, to think that the wisdom of God and the power of God should be exerted upon no necessity. What is it for? only to please curiosity? That which is done not to answer necessity, can only be supposed to be done to please and gratify curiosity. Now to think that the wisdom of God should make infinite power, ever and anon, to stoop to do miraculous works, only to please and gratify a vain and curious humour, without any need, this were the most unworthy of God of any thing we could suppose: and therefore, this is never to be looked for. If then there be sufficient ordinary means to beget a certainty concerning this, it would be a very foolish thing to expect that miracles should be wrought to prove it to us at this day, that these books we now have are, for substance, the same that those were which were owned for divine in Christ's and the apostles' days. For if any one would assert, that it was needful a miracle should be wrought to this purpose, to assure us that these books were the same they were in former times; I would know who it is that should have opportunity of seeing this miracle? Must every one that should be obliged to believe these books to be the same, see such a miracle wrought himself? That were to make miracles more necessary than ever they were; for even in Christ's and his apostles' days, it was never thought necessary that every person should have the sight of a miracle himself, but it was enough that it was notoriously known that such and such miracles were done. But if it were not thought necessary in Christ's and his apostles' days, that miracles should be wrought in the sight of every person, that every one for his own satisfaction should have the sight of such a miracle himself, then the testimony of such persons must be relied upon in this case, as it would be supposed could have no inclination or design to deceive others, by misrepresenting things to them: and that is such a testimony as upon which all matters among men do depend. "It is said in your law, (saith our Saviour to the Jews,) the testimony of two witnesses is true;" that is, is credible, is not to be doubted: the whole frame of government depends upon witnesses.

There would be no law, no justice, no society kept on foot in the world, if the testimony of credible witnesses were not to be respected and attended to. Now if, in this way, there must be reliance on credible witnesses some where, that is, if some few should in our own time see a miracle done, and they make report of it, and their testimony is to be believed, why may we not believe as well the credible testimony of former times, as believe the credible testimony of persons in our own time? If the sober reason of men be yielded to in this case, no man can imagine what reason of difference is assignable, but that we may as well rely upon the testimony of our forefathers, concerning matters of fact, as upon the testimony of those that live in the same age with us; but have seen with their own eyes, what we have not seen with ours. And do not we know that most of the estates in which persons do claim property, do depend upon the testimony of witnesses that are dead a hundred years ago? Certainly, men would have very bad titles to their estates, if the testimony of witnesses dead many scores of years or some hundreds of years ago, were not to be relied on even now. This is plain, that we have the same rational way and method of knowing these books to be the same they were, that is, by such testimony as is the very means of setting on foot all property, and all the administration of law and justice, in civilized nations, all the world over. And we have the same means to know this, as by which we come to know, that any other writings are theirs whose names they bear: such as the writings of Seneca, Aristotle, and the like. We have the same means to know this by, as we have for other things that are of greatest importance to mankind in this world, and by which we come to know, other men's works that we have now in our hands, are the same which were written so many hundred years ago. And if so, then it were the most unreasonable thing, that miracles should now be reckoned necessary to be wrought to prove this thing to us, and if a miracle were now to be wrought, there must be a relying upon present witnesses, upon the testimony of this present age; and why might we not as well rely upon witnesses of the former age, as on witnesses of the present age? No reason can be assigned. Therefore, it would be absurd to expect God should extraordinarily prove this to us, when it could be sufficiently proved otherwise. That is the first thing to be forelaid.

And being forelaid, this one general consideration will prove, that these books are the same that they were in Christ's and his apostles' time, and cannot be otherwise; that is, that material alterations of them were altogether impossible. When I say material alterations, I only mean this, that there may have been some very minute undesigned alteration in transcribing of copies; a word may have been mistaken, or a letter may have been mistaken, somewhat here or there left out. But this can be no material or hurtful alteration, because they had always other copies to correct such mistakes by, that there could be no material alteration with design, that is the thing I deny to be possible, and assert to be impossible. There could be no designed alteration either of the books of the Old Testament, or of the books of the New Testament, since the time of Christ and his apostles. And,

[1.] Not of the books of the Old Testament.

First, It is impossible they can have been altered, since it is plain they were preserved before, and for a considerable time afterwards, with the greatest care imaginable. And that it is one of the great wonders of providence that God, for the preservation of these books, should make use of that scrupulous, and I might say, almost superstitious, care that was among those Jews, whose office it was to keep the books of the Old Testament. As,

It was known they used to count all the letters of the Old Testament, that they might be sure never to miss a letter. Again,

In transcribing copies, (which was frequent,) every copy was always examined by an appointed number of their wise men, as they termed them. Further,

If any copy should have been found, upon examination, to have four or five faults in it, in one copy of the whole Old Testament, that book was presently adjudged to be buried in the grave of one or other of their wise men. And lastly,

For those books that, upon examination, were found to be punctually true, it was very plain from the history of those times, that there was the greatest reverence paid to them imaginable. They never used to touch those perfect copies (taking them into their hands) without kissing them solemnly; nor to lay them down again without solemn kissing of them. They were never used to sit upon the place where one of those books were wont to be laid. If one of them by casualty fell to the ground, they appointed a solemn fast to be kept for it, as an ill-boding thing, that such a thing should happen. So that it is most plain that these keepers of the books of the Old Testament could never have it in design to corrupt any of them; but it was that which they did abhor above all things. And it was a principle (as Philo tells us, and Josephus much to the same purpose) instilled into the youth of that nation, and even those of the best quality, that they should run the utmost hazard and incur a thousand deaths, rather than they should suffer, to the utmost of their power, any alteration or diminution of any of those books; or that any of them should be lost any other way. And then, besides all this scrupulous care of the keepers of the books of the Old Testament, (with which a design of corruption would no way consist,) we may add,

Secondly, That the thing itself was afterwards impossible, simply impossible. If they would before, when it was in their own hands, they could; but afterwards, if they would, they could not; because that in Christ's and his apostles' days, a great number of them were (you know) converted to the Christian faith, who knew all the books of the Old Testament as well as themselves. Therefore, it was impossible now, for the infidel Jews, those that were not converted, to make any alteration, but it must be presently spied and exclaimed against: therefore it was a vain thing for any to attempt it, after so many were converted to the Christian religion. And thereupon we may further add,

Thirdly, That the testimonies that were contained in these books against themselves, and with which contained in them they are transmitted to us, do show that they never went about to corrupt them. The many testimonies against idolatry, contained in these books, whereby their forefathers from age to age, for many ages, were witnessed against, would have induced them to expunge all things that were therein contained against idolatry, (so tender were they of their reputation,) if there had not been a great awe upon their minds, never to attempt the corruption or the alteration of any thing in those books. The wickedness of their forefathers was, in these books, so highly remonstrated against, in respect of the testimonies they so often give against their idolatry, and yet these books we find in their own hands, with these testimonies in them, against the Jews and their forefathers, for many foregoing ages through sundry times and divers intervals; though we do not find after the second temple that people relapsed into that crime. And then, there is the fullest testimony against their infidelity in these books that can be. Who would not wonder that these books should come out of the hands of the Jews, with these testimonies, in the great controversy between the Christians and them? that is, of Christ being the Messiah, in which you have so punctual assertions against them, that nothing can be more. Those many testimonies that do concern the Messiah, particularly that famous prophecy, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh should come: and those numerous presages in many of the latter prophets, (Isaiah especially and sundry others,) make it one of the greatest wonders of providence, that such a book should come, with these things in it, out of these men's hands, against whom they are a continual remonstrance. But however, this proves that they did never design any alteration: either they saw it impossible for one while, and before that, they had no inclination or inducement that would be prevailing with them to go about it, that is, that there should be an alteration with design. And then,

[2.] For the books of the New Testament; that they cannot have been corrupted is most evident too. It is impossible they can, for you must consider in what time they were written: they must be written in Christ's time and the apostles'; now within the compass of that time, things

were brought to that state, that such a corruption was impossible upon two accounts, upon account of the distance of places into which the Gospel was spread, and upon account of the divisions that were so early fallen out among Christians.

First, Upon account of the distance of places whereinto, in the first century of years, the Gospel was spread. That is, into a vast part of Asia, and some considerable parts of Africa and Europe; some think into Britain itself, into our land. There are not very improbable grounds of conjecture, that it was so, even within the compass of Paul's own age. That made it impossible there could be any designed corruption or alteration in the writings of the New Testament; so considerable a number of men at such a distance from one another, could not agree to make such an alteration; and if they could not agree in it, one part must remonstrate against the other. And,

Secondly, The divisions that so early appeared in the Christian church made it likewise impossible. That passage of the apostle, (it may be,) is not greatly enough pondered according to the weightiness of the expression, that there must be heresies, there should be heresies, there must be heresies. This great use that hath been of the divisions in Christian churches is not (it may be) considered as it should be by many. But nothing can carry a clearer evidence and demonstration with it, than that, because of those divisions, any depravation of the said records, (that is, any material, general, successful, continued depravation,) is altogether impossible: because the one party would be continually declaiming and crying out against the other; and then how soon would it be espied? So for that particular instance, 1 John v. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." It is true it hath been found to be wanting in some few copies; and what an outcry was against it in the Christian church? So that if that alteration was made by the design of the Arians, (and if it were by any design at all, it must be by their design,) the very supposal of it brings the greatest blot upon them and their cause, that could be imagined; it being very plain that it was to be found in equally ancient copies. But it seems more likely, it was never left out by design at all. But because the matter at the beginning of the 8th verse was just the same with that of the beginning of the 7th verse, a more negligent transcriber, having his eye on the beginning of the 8th verse, might write on, and slip over, merely casually, the whole 7th verse. This being more likely that a verse, beginning as the following verse does, and ending like it, should be left out, than that a verse more than ought should be put in. And thus the design of making such an alteration would be defeated upon the attempt; so that upon that consideration it is altogether impossible that there should be any alteration at all. And therefore that this be stuck to, that there is no designed alteration in these books, and so can have been no material alteration in them.

It is true that in translations, persons have laboured to serve their own purposes, by translating this way and that, as they thought fit. But for alteration of copies, that is what never entered into the mind of any body to attempt; which is a thing so easily spied out, that nothing is more so; and so must needs blast and disserve the cause and interest of that party it was designed to serve, and therefore could never be. And the impossibility of any such alteration, it is easy for any man that useth his understanding, to apprehend from a familiar instance. And thus, do but take any one people that are under the same government, and that have their laws by which they are governed digested into some system or other; as for instance, our statute book; why suppose any ill-minded men in the nation should have a design to corrupt and alter the statute book; every one would see it to be impossible. Which way should they go to work to impose a false statute book upon a nation, wherein every man's right and property is concerned? And if any such should have such a design, they would soon give it up, as finding it impossible, and a thing not to be done, and therefore a vain thing to attempt. But the difficulty is a thousand times greater, of making any designed alteration of these sacred books and records, that are spread so unspeakably further than a nation, and wherein the concernments of all that have them in their hands are recorded, not temporal only, but eternal. Here is their all for eternity, and another world: so that it must be altogether impossible that there could have been such a thing effected; and therefore it is the most unlikely thing, that such a matter should ever be attempted. And then, I say, if there be that plain evidence, that for that reason, these books must be the same, that they cannot have been altered with design, and consequently not materially, then it were the most unreasonable thing in all the world, to expect, that God should confirm it to us otherwise than he hath done, or that the nature of the thing doth admit of: because otherwise, there must have been miracles wrought for every one to see, and take notice of: nay, that would altogether lose the usefulness and significancy of miracles themselves, because it would make miracles so common in such a case. If every man must have a miracle to prove to him, this is God's book, it would take off that particular thing for which they are only significant with men, that is, because they are rare and extraordinary things; and then they would cease to be so. It might as well be expected that every man should have a Bible reached him down by an invisible hand from heaven, as that there should be a miracle wrought to prove to him, that this was the same book that was so and so confirmed and sealed in our Saviour's and his apostles' time. And therefore I reckon, that upon the grounds that have been laid, it is very plain, both that these books that were extant under the name of Scripture, in our Saviour's and his apostles' time, were of divine authority; and that the books that we now have in our hands, are the same with those books, and therefore are of divine authority.

Preached January 22nd, 1691

LECTURE IX.*

Now what we shall further say, as to the two things laid down before, will be to answer an *objection* which possibly may arise in the minds of some: to wit,

That this way of being ascertained of the divinity first, and then, secondly, concerning the identity and sameness still of these books, doth seem to resolve our faith, at length, into a human testimony, and so, at length, to make only a human faith. That is, that all rests upon this—that we have been truly told, and by such as lived before us in the world, that there were such books in their time, and we are led by testimony in following ages, to collect that these are the same books. Is not this (may some say) to resolve our faith into a human testimony, and so to make it only a human faith? In answer to this I have several things to say,

1. That it is very plain, that a human testimony must be depended upon *aliquatenus, some way or other*, in reference to all the concernments of religion. That is a point out of doubt, some dependance there must be upon human testimony. Suppose a preacher came among a company of illiterate men, men that could never so much as read; or if any of them were so, (which is a thing not unusual in Christian congregations,) and he takes a text, and produces (it may be) many more parallel ones out of the Bible for the doctrines which he preacheth; how can these men know that this is a Bible he preacheth out of, but by a human testimony? And even for those that can read, they must depend upon a human testimony, that what they read is a true translation: supposing them not to be learned themselves in, or not having opportunity to consult, the originals, they must depend upon the testimony of the learned, who have viewed those books in the original, such as lexicographers and the like, for the true signification and translation of the words they read. This therefore is plain and out of question, that some use there must be of a human

testimony in reference to the concernments of religion. And I add,

2. It is no more strange that God should state our case, so as to oblige us to some dependence upon human testimony, than that he should state it so as we must have a necessary dependence upon our own sense. We are told that "faith comes by hearing;" we can have no ordinary way to come to the knowledge of the things contained in these books, but by the use of our eyes, and the use of our ears. And I could fain know why there should be a greater sacredness in these organs of our own, than in those of other men. Why should mine eye or ear be thought a more sacred thing than the voice or tongue of another man? And again,

3. It is one thing to use a human testimony, in a case wherein God hath ordained and appointed to do it, and another thing to do it besides or against his ordination and appointment. Here we are to distinguish between matters of fact and matters of right. We are to make use of the testimony of men, even by God's own appointment, in reference to matters of fact; to inform us only of mere matter of fact. This is an institution of God. "It is written in your law (saith our Saviour) that the testimony of two or three witnesses is true." "I come unto you in the mouth of two or more witnesses," saith the apostle, "and in the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established." This is a divine ordination: it is not an arbitrary thing taken up by men at random, and of their own choice and pleasure; but it is God's stated medium and way, wherein he hath appointed, that persons are to be informed concerning matters of fact, which they are concerned to know, and of which they have not the immediate knowledge themselves. "It is written in your law (saith Christ to the Jews) that the testimony of two men is true." What law was that? It was the divine law. God hath enacted, that the testimony of a competent number of witnesses should be relied upon, to assure us of the truth of those matters of fact, that they do testify; and you do well know, that upon this ground (so material a thing this is) depends all the administration of justice throughout the world. Otherwise, no judge would determine in reference to any case, which came not under the sight of his own eye, or whereof he was an ear-witness. And so this would subvert the very foundations of all human society. There could be no such thing as human society in the world upon these terms; and therefore we must look upon this as a holy, wise constitution of the great Ruler of this world, who hath ordained and appointed, that in reference to such matters of fact, as we are concerned to have the knowledge of, and have not the immediate knowledge of ourselves, we are to depend upon the testimony of others. And this is not an arbitrary thing that we take up of ourselves, but a thing that the wisdom of Heaven hath constituted and set for the preserving of common order here, among men in this world. And,

4. The difference is unspeakably great, between relying upon men's testimony, as to mere matters of fact; and relying upon it, as to matters of right. We may have a difference upon the authority of one or two credible witnesses, reporting to us such matters of fact, when as to which is right and wrong, we will have no dependence upon them at all. As now suppose any of you receive a letter from some person of very great authority and quality, and for whom you have great deference and duty, this letter comes to you by the hands of a footman; do you pay a deference to the man, in believing what is contained in the letter? No, all the belief of what is contained in the letter, is resolved into the authority of him that wrote it, and from whom it comes. Only you may look upon this as a fit medium to convey it to you; and you rely (if there be occasion to do so much) no more upon the footman, as to matter of fact, but that he received this letter from his lord or master to deliver to you; but his testimony hath no influence upon the contents of this letter, one way or other.

And this therefore leads you sufficiently to understand how to answer yourselves, if any should further inquire—Pray how doth this differ from the notion that runs among them of the Romish church, that is, that we are beholden to their tradition for the Scriptures we have, and for our Christianity, and for all that we have any knowledge of in the things of God and religion?—Why, it differs the most that can be. For,

(1.) The papists do not only claim to be witnesses in the case, but they claim to be the only witnesses: which they most pretencelessly and injuriously assume to themselves: for we do not rely upon them as the sole witnesses, nor as witnesses at all, but only as they join and fall in with the concurrent testimony of the rest of the Christian churches, that have the same books among them that we have. We are no more beholden to them, than we are to other Christians. Nor,

(2.) Do we rely barely upon the testimony of Christian churches, as to the matters of fact contained in these books, but we rely upon the concurrent testimony of the rest of the world, Jews and pagans themselves, as to the truth of matters of fact, which we need to be informed about, in the matters of our religion. The papists do engross to themselves to be the only witnesses, most falsely, and without the least colour of pretence. But we reckon the testimony of an enemy, an avowed, professed enemy, is of the greatest strength in such a case imaginable. That is the testimony we have from the Jews, and the testimony we have from the pagans, of matters of fact, when the matter of fact is against, plainly against them. This we think we have a great deal of reason to lay much stress and weight upon. Now it is very plain as to mere matters of fact, pagans themselves have owned the truth of those matters of fact, upon which the Christian doth depend: to wit, the wonderful works wrought by our Saviour and his apostles to prove the doctrines that they preached, and that are contained in these books. Pagans do not deny these matters of fact, we have them in divers of their own writings. For as to those miracles wrought by Christ, in his own time, to prove the truth of Christianity, (which was done on purpose that they might know that Jesus was the Son of God; that men might believe this, and that by believing it, might have life through his name,) Celsus, that great enemy of the Christian religion, never goes about to deny the matter of fact: he knew that would be vain; all the world knew the truth of the matter of fact; only he takes a great deal of pains to show how it was possible that such things might be done by other invisible powers. Just the same conceit that the Jews had among themselves, when they tell our Saviour, that he cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. That is, they did suppose the devil to have fallen out with himself, and that all his business was industriously to destroy his own kingdom. Indeed, the greatest and most momentous matters of fact, by which Christianity was confirmed at first, are freely granted by the most considerable pagans. We find in their writings, an acknowledgment of those things that filled the world with so much wonder, and they labour partly to turn off all by referring the great wonders to other causes and agents; and partly by pretending, that as strange things have been wrought by their own hands: as the setting up of Apollonius Tyanæus, that great magician; whereas, the disparity is so great that nothing is more so, nor can be to any, who consider, that those tricks wrought by him, were easily detected of fraud and imposture, and were pretended to be wrought to no considerable purpose. But the others were frequent and often repeated, and in common sight, and without any design of hiding; so as that when men that have been concerned have canvassed and searched as much as possible, to know whether they were true or no, the light hath shone into their faces, and they have been forced to yield and own that a great and notable work hath been done, "and we cannot deny it." And with great dread and consternation they beheld the world running after Christ and his apostles, these works carrying so great a light in them, that were wrought for that design. And,

(3.) There is this difference besides, in what the papists do arrogate to themselves about this matter of testifying, from what we admit and assert; that is, that they assume to themselves the making of doctrines that shall be of equal authority with these books. And one of their greatest men among them, is known to have used that blasphemous saying, that this book hath no more of authority, than Æsop's fables, other than what it hath derived from their

church. And if it were not for the authority it fetcheth from their church, it were no more to be regarded than Æsop's fables: which is so great an insolence, that indeed one would wonder (but that Divine patience will magnify itself till the time of taking vengeance upon that apostate church come) that a thunderbolt from heaven should not have vindicated such a blasphemy, with all things else that are of the same piece among them, and carry the same import and signification: for we know they take upon them to say and unsay, to do and undo, to maim and mangle this book, and set up contrary institutions to it; as is particularly known in that great ordinance of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. And then,

(4.) As to the business of being mere witnesses of matter of fact, there they have proved themselves false and unfaithful; that is, in foisting in the apocryphal books into the canon of the Scripture, against the authority both of the Jewish church and the ancient church, as the world may judge at this day that read them.

So that there is no parity at all in these two cases, the relying by God's institution and appointment upon a human testimony, but as a medium to convey and transmit to us our knowledge of bare matter of fact, and their assuming to themselves to be the only one to be relied upon, not only as to matter of fact, but as to the authority by which right and wrong, and the truth and falsehood of doctrine, are to be finally decided and judged of. And thus far then we think, that the way of proving the sameness of these books with those that bore the character of sacred books, or books of divine authority, is altogether unexceptionable, and so strong, as that there can lie nothing against it to the common reason and understanding of men, when we have such a way of being assured of this matter, as must be convictive to any that do allow themselves the liberty and use of their understandings. And it would be a very foolish expectation, to think that God should gratify the fanciful curiosities of men, by working wonders among them continually and repeatedly to no purpose.

Upon all this I shall superadd some considerations that may give strength to all that hath been said before. As,

1. By common consent of all mankind, some divine revelation or other is necessary to the ends of religion, besides mere natural light. We do not find or read of any sort of people under heaven that have pretended to any thing of religion, but have likewise also pretended to somewhat or other of divine revelation, besides what was natural and common to men as men, as necessary for the conduct of the affairs of religion, or for which such a thing as religion was to be kept on foot in the world. Look back amongst any sort of people, as to the most ancient accounts we have in the world of any thing of religion, and we shall find it so: as for instance, if we go to the Egyptians of old, the Phœnicians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Grecians, the Romans, the ancient Gauls and Britons; nay, if we carry it as far as China, for such accounts as we have of their religion and what it hath been for some hundreds of years past, nay, and some thousands of years backwards. All these people have pretended to somewhat of divine revelation, over and besides natural light; none of them but have had those among them whom they always took to be inspired persons. I am not considering now, whether their pretensions be right or wrong, true or false, but all have agreed in this sentiment, that there did need some other revelation besides the light of nature, in order to the ends and purposes of religion. They always had some sacred persons among them. Their priests, their magi, gymnosophists, their brahmins, their bards, their druids, whom they always took for inspired persons; and received dictates and directions from them still in reference to matters of religion; yea, and in reference to other matters too, as so many inspired persons: thus still by their own confession, owning mere natural light insufficient for the purposes of religion. Famous it is, (besides all that hath been intimated before,) concerning those several sorts of sacred persons, that the several nations had amongst them, that when Numa began to settle religion at Rome, in the first forming of that people he pretended to have all his directions from his goddess Egeria, whom he conversed and met with in the woods, and consulted of those affairs from time to time. And the people of the Chinese are reckoned to have all their methods of religion and all their notions of it from that Confucius, for whom they have the greatest veneration, that ever any people could be supposed to have of one as an inspired person; so as that deference was never paid by the Turks to their Mahomet, which is paid by these Chinese to their Confucius, whom they had their religion from, at least one thousand years before ever the other was known in the world.

Now this, to me, is a very great thing, that by the common consent of mankind in all the known and noted nations of which we have any record or notices among us, they should pretend constantly to somewhat or other of divine revelation, in reference to the affairs of religion; thereby giving us, as the common sentiment of mankind, that mere natural light was not enough, but some divine revelation was further to be superadded, for the conduct and management of the affairs of religion in the world. And to that is to be added,

2. That as this would be *argumentum ad hominem*, (it being the common sentiment of mankind,) so it is very apparent from the nature of the thing, that really and truly it is a matter of plain necessity in itself, that there be some superadded revelation to the mere light of nature. For notwithstanding the pretence of it, (that pretence of it to be sure, can never do the business or answer the end for which the thing itself is necessary,) yet it is plain, that the very thing, that is, a real and divine revelation, is necessary over and besides mere natural light, as that lies now so much corrupted, depraved, and obscured, among the sons of men, if you do but consider into how miserable delusions men have generally fallen, where such a real divine revelation was wanting, in reference to the greatest and most important things of religion. As what can we suppose greater or of more importance to religion than these two, the object of it, and the end of it? The object of it is the God we are to worship, and the end of it is the felicity that we are to design and aim at in all the exercises of that worship, and in the whole course of our religion. Where there is not a real divine revelation, what monstrous conceits have been taken up concerning the object of religion! The polytheism of the gentile and pagan world, is a plain and pregnant proof what a necessity there was that over and besides the mere light of nature, God should reveal himself as the peculiar and sole object of religion according to what he is in himself. For though it be true indeed, that many of the wisest philosophers among the pagans have had right sentiments of the one Deity, the supreme *Numen, God*; yet for the generality of the people, how much otherwise hath it been! And with whom these wiser men have been forced to comply and fall in, temporizing with them whose own wicked and gross conceptions have led them to worship for deities, the sun, moon, and stars; or heroes, the souls of men departed from among them; and sometimes to come so low as to worship dogs and cats, weasels, apes, serpents, onions, leeks and garlic, fountains and rivers, and the like, for gods. So apparent need was there for a divine revelation to inform men about the object of their worship, above that light that is common to men as men. And then as concerning the end of religion, felicity, the great diversity of opinions among the pagans, (and even the wiser of them,) no less than two hundred eighty and eight, about the *summum bonum, chief good*, shows how great need there is of a particular divine direction, as to what that is which we are to design for ourselves as our final and eternal felicity. To these I add,

3. That supposing the necessity of a divine revelation about matters that relate to religion and our future blessedness, it must some time or other have become necessary that it should be a written revelation, put into writing upon record. Some time I say, I do not say always, necessary. It is plain it must be less necessary in former ages of the world, when by reason of the vast longevity and length of life, about three or four persons might see through two thousand years and upwards, and so give an account but by three or four hands, of the most material and important things, that were of common concernment for men, as such, to know about the beginning of the world and the like. And no doubt there was great care taken to preserve the memory of what was necessary to be known, by monu-

ments and the like, as Seth's pillars were, of which Josephus gives a particular account in his time. But I suppose there were only oral traditions, for that time, passing from hand to hand; and that of things of so apparent common importance and necessity, that none can imagine but if the persons were persons of tolerable prudence, (and we have no reason but to apprehend they were persons of great prudence, some at least that were more especially concerned, as Adam himself, Enoch, Noah, and Shem,) there could not but have been very distinct accounts transmitted from such hands, of what was necessary to be known concerning the original of the world, and what the pleasure of him that made it was, concerning the affairs of his worship in those days. And we may easily apprehend ourselves if, in any family among us, any thing of great concernment to the nation, (much more to all mankind,) should have come to the notice of an ancestor of ours; as, suppose any of you could say, "My grandfather or my great-grandfather had certain notices, some way or other, conveyed to him of such and such matters of fact, of the greatest importance imaginable to the whole nation;" do you think that that would be forgotten in three or four ages in that family? And as little supposable is it, that in three or four ages of so long a duration, all that concerned the original of the world, and revealed will of its Creator, how men ought to live, and order their course in the world, would be forgotten.

But afterwards, when the lives of men grew shorter, it is most apparent, there was a necessity that such things as were most requisite to be known, and were of most common use, should be digested into records in writing. And so we find first, the books of Moses written; and afterwards, there was an addition of more and more made, as God thought fit, in following ages, till the fulness of time, when we have the clearest light of an entire Gospel revelation handed to us from our Lord himself, who came from the bosom of his Father to reveal and make him known, and his whole mind and will to men. And indeed, for them that would substitute tradition, and particularly that of oral tradition, in the room of this sacred written rule, they do it with the greatest absurdity that can be imagined: and indeed with the greatest immodesty, in them that now-a-days pretend to it. It is true, we read the apostle did take order with Timothy that some particular things which he had seen and taken notice of, and heard from him, he should commit to faithful men that might be able to teach and instruct others. There were many useful things that were not presently put into writing. But as for these men, under the notion of faithful witnesses, they have the least reason of any men in the world to lay claim to that office and dignity, of being the conveyancers to us of the things that concern us, in reference to our salvation and our eternal well-being: for when they take upon them to be authors, they cannot be looked upon to have done the part of faithful witnesses. How strangely have they innovated upon that religion which they boast to have been the conveyers of to us! How much another thing have they made it, to what it was, in doctrinals and worship, and even in reference to the affairs of common conversation itself! So that we may see, even by the insolency of this pretence of theirs, enough to assure us of the necessity of such a written rule to resort unto. And indeed, in what case had the Christian religion been at this day, and the professors of it in the world, if we had not had this written rule in our hands, to correct and discover plainly wherein they have prevaricated and corrupted the Christian religion? So that we may seek Christianity in the Christian world, as was said of old concerning the city of Samium, it was so altered that Samium was to be sought in Samium itself; so we would still be to seek Christianity among Christians, if we had not these records to set us right, and let us know what Christian religion was at first.

And upon the whole matter, as to those that would so officiously substitute their traditions in the room of the clear light of this written word, it is much a like case as if any of you should fall in with one travelling on the way, and he offers himself to be your companion and guide, and tells you that you have eyes that you make use of in choosing your way, but these eyes are only troublesome to you, they represent to you diversities of objects that draw this way and that, so that you cannot mind your path. "And pray (saith he) let me put out those eyes of yours, and submit yourself to my conduct," and all that he may guide you into a pit. Or a like case it would be, as if you should have writings in your hands, any of you, that were ancient, and did concern the title to an estate of yours from ages past, and one should say to you, "These writings have a great deal of obscurity in them, pray let me have these writings and dispose of them as I see good, and you need not doubt but that there will be witnesses enough to prove your title if there be occasion; and you do not need to question but I will take care to defend you and make out your title;" and to think to rob you of them by such a fraudulent artifice. Just thus would they deal with us about the sacred records, in which our all for eternal life do lie. But very plain it is upon all these grounds, that it was necessary there should be somewhat of divine revelation superadded to mere natural light; and was also necessary, some time, that it should be a written one.

4. Supposing this, that it is necessary there should be a written revelation of the mind of God, about matters that do concern our present religion and future felicity, then we have none at all extant in the world that can come in any plausible competition with this book, unless you will bring the Mahometan Alcoran into competition with it. Nothing else doth pretend to be a rule of faith and light to men. And for that Alcoran, (besides what it hath borrowed, or stolen, rather, from the Bible,) it is a book full of so gross absurdities, that they who have but common sense, would soon discern the difference between them; and how little of pretence there could be to bring that into competition with this, much less to carry it against this upon such a comparison. There are things in it so manifestly contrary to the common light and reason of men, as there would be ground enough for a most contemptuous rejection of it upon that score: such as its asserting the corporeity of the Divine nature; and that the felicity of the future state in the other world doth consist only in bodily pleasures and the like; things manifestly refutable by common natural light. And besides the contradiction that there is to the common reason of men in so great things as these, it is made up of contradictions and repugnancies to itself. For it doth say even that concerning him, upon whom, you know, our great hopes depend, which it doth, in the most substantial things, afterwards gainsay and contradict; for it owns him to be a great and a holy prophet, sent by God into this world. But if their religion should be true, he must be the falsest prophet (one of them) that ever was upon the face of the earth, or that ever pretended to prophecy; for did not he avow and give himself out to be the Son of God? If he were a true prophet he did truly say this, that he was the Son of God, and that he and his Father were one: and if he were a true prophet he did truly say this also, that the religion he taught, and the professors of it, should continue, and he with them, to the end of the world; and then the Mahometan religion was never to subvert and root out the Christian.

It is plain therefore, that nothing under the name of a divine revelation can with any the least plausibleness be brought into competition with this book. And therefore, if a divine revelation were necessary, and a written revelation were necessary, this must be it, and there can be no other. It is true indeed, some enthusiastical persons have pretended to inspiration as to this or that particular thing; but none have undertaken to pretend, that they are so inspired of God as to give a full, particular, perfect system and model, of all that is to be believed and done, in reference to worship and religion. So that this book hath really no plausible pretender or competitor against it.

5. Whereas, it doth pretend and avow itself to be divine, and of divine original; it hath those inimitable characters of divinity upon it, which most plainly justify that pretence; I shall, before I instance, only forelay this—That we must consider, when we would make a judgment upon this thing, whether this thing be a God-like thing, yea or no, and carries visible characters of divinity stamped upon it, we are, in making our judgment about this matter, to consider, not barely what is spoken or contained in this book, but also to whom such things are spoken, whose use this book was designed to serve and what use it was

intended for. We are not to consider, in this case, how God should speak if he were to publish an edict, or make an oration from the throne of glory to the innumerable company of angels, those glorious creatures that surround him above. That is none of the case that we are to consider. But we are to consider how we would expect him to speak, or how he would direct things to be written, that were intended for all sorts of men, here in this world, from the highest to the lowest, of all capacities and of all conditions, that have any exercise of reason and understanding. We are not to expect that one sort of Bible should have been written for learned men, and another for unlearned; or that one sort of Bible was written for citizens and another for country people; but we are to suppose that there was to be a book written that should suit the capacities of all sorts of persons from the highest to the lowest. And what could have been more God-like, more suitable to his wisdom and goodness, and more agreeable to the capacity and necessity of men in general, than what we have here in this book? And consider the use that it was to serve, what it was indeed to be written for. It was for the saving of miserable creatures that were in a lost, perishing state. It was never intended that such a book should be written, only to please men's fancies, or gratify their humours, or tickle their ears. It was intended for saving lost, miserable souls from perishing for ever; and those of all sorts, of all capacities, from the highest to the lowest; and so nothing could have been imagined more worthy of God, than the composure of this Book, for such persons and for such uses. And now to particularize a little, as to such divine characters which are conspicuous in it, and which I call inimitable, that could have proceeded from none but a divine Author,—As,

(1.) The majesty of the style: How great, how august and God-like it is! in the whole of it; take it entirely in the whole frame, and nothing could appear, in respect to the style, more majestic or more worthy of God. Though the case must be considered with a diversity, that is, that he did make use of human penmen, and it is never to be supposed, that he should direct every word and every phrase by an extraordinary immediate inspiration: for then it were impossible there should have been a diversity of style, but all the parts must have been in one and the same style. But there was that influx of the Divine Spirit that did most certainly guide the writers, as to all the substance of what was to be written and recorded by them; which did attemper itself to the natural genius of those that were made use of as the penmen, so that the communication of the Holy Ghost, received by such and such men, of such and such a constitution, temper, and genius, comes to be diversified in that manner, as if one comes to pour a quantity of water into such and such a particular vessel, the water in its form will resemble the figure of the vessel; if the vessel be round, the water falls into a round figure; if the vessel be square, the water is formed into that figure unavoidably. And so the same communication of the Holy Ghost, being poured into such a vessel as this or that man was, comes to be accordingly diversified. That very communication to such a one as Isaiah, for instance, receives one sort of figure there, and a communication to such a one as Micah, receives another figure there; when yet all these communications are from one and the same Fountain, and serve for one and the same common purpose. And indeed, upon the whole, it doth appear, that the greatness of the way of speaking it, doth so suit the majesty of God as nothing could do more, when men have come forth and spoken and written in the name of the Lord; and have from time to time pronounced, "Thus saith the Lord;" and when they have been directed to personate God, "I am the Lord; do so, and so. I am the Lord;" this is so becoming the greatness, the grandeur of the Author of this book, that it is not a supposable thing that there should be any, that would assume the confidence, in reference to things of this nature, to take upon them at such a rate; that is, comparing the confidence of such a pretence with the matter that is spoken of; and nothing is more evident than that this is agreeable to God only, or to one immediately directed by God only, and none else. And upon what was noted to you concerning the difference of styles, for such parts of this book wherein God is represented to be the immediate Speaker, himself making this use of man, it is evident in such cases, when he hath appeared more immediately as the Author of what was said, nothing beneath God can be supposed to have spoken like him. As now to instance, there is that song called the song of Moses in the 32nd of Deuteronomy; God doth give immediate directions to publish the words of such a song to this people, and to keep it as a record among them. It seems most likely that every word there was dictated immediately by God himself. And who did ever read any thing so great and so august as the words of that song are? And so when we find God immediately speaking to Job, in some of the latter chapters of that book, Who can imitate the majesty of what is said? which is there spoken unto him, when God speaketh to him himself out of the whirlwind. And,

(2.) Consider the sublimity of the matter: How mighty, great things are contained in this book! As in that Hosea viii. 12. "I have written unto them the great things of my law." To take such a summary as that, 1 Tim. iii. 16. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." How mighty things are these, of how sublime a nature! And these make the principal contents of this book. And then,

(3.) Do but consider again, the comprehensiveness of this sacred volume, of how vast extent it is. And what mind, but the mind of God, could have comprehended and collected together so great a variety of things as we find in this book? So as that nothing can be pretended to be wanting; not one thing can be so much as alleged is wanting that is requisite to be put into such a book, to serve the end it pretends to serve, and that it avows itself to be designed for. Things that suit all states of men from the highest to the lowest, all ages and each sex. Things we have that make up the system of what we are to believe, and things that compose and make up the system of what we are to do, and what makes up the system for us of what we are to desire. Do but look to the *credenda*, and the *agenda*, and the *petenda* or *speranda*; where we may have the collected *digesta* of the one kind and the other; and who can pretend any thing to be wanting here? The comprehensiveness of this book speaks the divinity of it, having that in it which suits every case and every purpose for which such a book can be desirable, or can be pretended to be so. And then,

(4.) Consider too, its correspondency to the spirit of man, which it was designed to rectify and set right, and be a measure unto, if you look upon the spirit of man under a threefold capacity. That is, look upon it as merely rational, or look upon it as corrupt and depraved, or look upon it as regenerate and renewed; and the contents of this book do most admirably suit it every way. Look upon it as merely rational, and nothing so adequate to the mind and reason of a man; so as that, though things in it there are indeed, that the reason of man could not have found out; there is nothing in it which the reason of man would not approve, being represented and laid before it. If we consider the condition of man as corrupt, what delineations have we of the corrupt frame and temper of the spirit of man in this state! And nothing, to me, is a greater argument of the truth of our religion in general, than to find such exact descriptions of the state of man, suiting the temper in which he is now to be found upon the original depravation in all his conditions in this world. So that just such a thing as a carnal man was, and was represented to have been, five thousand years ago, just such a one he is now; all the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart of man are evil, and continually so. And when God looks down from heaven upon man, to understand who it is that seeks after God, there is none that is found doing good, no not one; none seeking after God; for that good must be chiefly meant: as if all the world did agree in that one common sense, to say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways: let not God molest or disturb us in our course." Just so is the degenerate spirit and temper of man represented, and how true a representation is it! And then look upon the spirit of man as renewed, and how lively a description is there of the

regenerate man, the renewed man! just so desiring after God, the living God, as this book doth express; there placing its sole felicity and highest delight, there reposing its treasure, there placing the study of the heart, to be sincere and upright in his sight; who but God could have made such a representation of man? And that I take to be a further consideration which shows the divinity of this book, even those most inimitable characters of its divine Author that are most conspicuous to every discerning eye. But I add,

(5.) The wonderful efficacy this word hath had upon the souls of men, from age to age. It hath shown itself to be "the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." What multitudes has it subdued! This sword of the Spirit, and arrows taken from hence, how "sharp have they been in the hearts of the King's enemies," by which multitudes have been thrown down and made subject! what conquests hath it made! Though indeed there have been sad dark intervals: but no more but what have been foretold long ago, wherein the progress of the Christian interest and religion should be slow and little; no other was to be expected, according to what was long ago foretold of. But if you consider the vast increases that were within the first and second centuries, so that some of the ancients have taken notice, and one particularly, by way of apology, to the emperor that then was, "we grow so numerous," (saith he,) "that were it not for the peaceableness of our spirits and principles, you could not subsist in opposition to us. It were easy for us to overturn the empire: and were it possible for us to retire and draw from the world, the world would wonder at its own emptiness." And Pliny writing to Trajan, another of their emperors, tells him, that rigorous and severe practices against the Christians were now altogether impracticable and might be dangerous: for he tells him, every where the way to the temples was overgrown with grass, and there were none to buy up their sacrifices, and there was no way in the world to keep peace in the empire, but to be very benign to the Christians. And he did procure, by that epistle, a great suspension of the rage, and cessation of the persecution, that was at that time. And then, all this was done, not by the power of arms, (as the Mahometan religion hath spread itself in the world,) but only by the power of this very word, the doctrine of Christ; whereby it appears to be "the wisdom of God and the power of God." I have discoursed to you at large before, of the strong and irrefragable evidence that is given to the truth of this book by the prophecies, and by the miracles we find recorded in it; the punctual predictions of the former, and the obsignations given to divine truth, given by divine power, in the latter. But this seal, set upon the souls of men by the sanctifying Spirit, (whereof this word hath been continually the instrument,) carries to seeing and discerning persons the greatest evidence imaginable in it. It was the saying of Plato, that "the world is God's epistle to men; the characters of his invisible power and goodness being so visible upon it." And how raised would his thoughts have been, and how much transported would he have been beyond the transport in which he was on this occasion, if he had but known and viewed this divine and sacred book! But then, to find it again, copied out and transcribed in men's hearts! "You are," saith the apostle, "the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart," 2 Cor. iii. 3. What a demonstration is here of the Divine Author that hath made work, even by his word, upon the hearts and souls of men? So as that the same apostle speaks in that, 2 Cor. xiii. 3. "Do you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but mighty in you?" "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith," "Do you seek a proof of Christ speaking by me?" See him in this book, and look into yourselves, such of you as have been converted and turned by my ministry; see if you be not Christ's epistle. See if he hath not written out the greatest and most necessary things about him and his religion, out of this book into your own hearts. And I add,

(6.) That the high complacency that the best men take in this book, must needs prove it to be divine to their own sense. It is true, that there wants not rational evidence to demonstrate the divine authority or divinity of this book, to any that shall at leisure impartially consider the thing. But it is a far more lively proof that any one hath of this in himself and in his own soul, when he is made to taste, in the word, how gracious the Lord is, when he hath the pleasant relish of it in his own spirit: when he can say by his own experience, "Oh, how sweet are thy words to my mouth, yea sweeter than honey to my taste!" when it is to him a recreation to retire and set himself to think, and consider, and study upon these great and deep things of God; when once he comes to experience this, that the law of God is his delight, and that therein he can exercise himself night and day. So it was, when much less was written of this book than what we now have. If David had seen all the writings of the New Testament, and of the prophets that succeeded himself, and had had the complete, entire volume in his hands that we have, with what transports would he have spoken of the ravishing pleasures of this book! how delectable a study must it have been to his soul! I hope (though it is much to be lamented indeed that there are no more) there are many at this day that find it thus: "We approve it ourselves, in our own hearts; this must be, this cannot but be the divine word, it is so delectable, so refreshing to our souls." And,

(7.) Lastly, Take this by way of addition, the plain and manifest design it hath to make men holy and good, and consequently to make them blessed and happy at length, proves it to be divine. It hath manifestly this design, and can have no other. This is a thing that speaks itself to every conscience of man that doth consider, that is, that this book in the general composure of it hath a design to make men good and holy; and consequently to make them blessed and happy; and can have no other design. Every one must suppose that such a book as this came not by chance into the world; if not by chance, then it came by design; and if it came by design, then something or other must be designed in it. It doth serve this end manifestly, aims at this, to make men holy and pure, and fit them for heaven and a blessed eternity; and it hath no other design, it aims at nothing else. This then must be of God; this must either have been a divine revelation from God himself, (as it avows itself to be,) or it must be one of the most horrid forgeries that ever was contrived under heaven, ever since the creation of the world. But I would appeal to any man's conscience, whether it is likely any one would be guilty of so audacious a wickedness, to entitle the holy God to be the Author of an imposture, for no other end than to make men holy and good? would men be so wicked as this, for no other end but to make the world good? Their own fact would fly in their faces. Here is a design to make the world holy and happy; and if the world were thus, as this book would make it, if it were suitable to it and the contents of it, if there were that love to God and Christ and our neighbours, that holiness, that righteousness upon earth that are expressed in, and designed to be promoted by, this book, what a blessed world were this! The very image and idea of heaven itself. But to think that men should be guilty of the greatest wickedness that ever was done under the sun, with so good a design, is the most inconsistent and unimaginable thing that can be.

These considerations, superadded to what was largely spoken to before, I reckon will prove the matter out of doubt, (with all that impartially consider and weigh things,) that these Scriptures are of divine authority.

LECTURE X.*

THAT which we have further yet to do upon this subject, is only to say somewhat by way of answer to an objection or two; and then to conclude and shut up all in some use.

Objection 1. Some such thought may possibly arise in the minds of some, that if these books be indeed of divine revelation in order to the salvation of souls, as you have

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heard they are, it may seem strange that they have been confined to so little a part of the world, to so small a portion of mankind. As for the books of the Old Testament, while they only were in being, that they should be shut up in so narrow limits as Palestine, a very little, inconsiderable spot, compared with the rest of the world. In Judah, it was said, God was known, as being unknown to the rest of the world, Psalm lxxvi. 1. And he gave his word to Jacob, and his statutes and judgments to Israel; and did not so to any nation, Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God, as the apostle speaks, Rom. iii. 2. And afterwards, when Christianity came, in the fulness of time, to obtain in the world, how little a way, in comparison, did the Christian records reach, or have reached hitherto! According to common computation, the world being divided into thirty parts, nineteen do yet remain totally paganish in the grossest sense, and the other eleven between Mahometans and Christians, and not above a sixth part of the world that are so much as Christians in name, and of them how great a part have the Bible reserved and locked up from them, they not being permitted the use and knowledge of it! All this may seem very strange, if we consider these Scriptures as a divine revelation purposely vouchsafed in order to the salvation of the souls of men.

Why in reference to this I shall offer you some considerations that I hope may not be unuseful. As,

1. Suppose that there had been no saving design at all set on foot in reference to the apostate sons of men, but that they had been left under the same remediless condition with the apostate angels, what wrong had there been done? who could have had whereof to accuse the righteous Lord and sovereign Ruler of all this world? Why might not he have left all to sink without remedy or hope, into so deserved, yea, and a self-procured ruin? It is therefore apparently not a matter of right, but of free favour, if God afford any apt and suitable means in order to the saving of any. And what is not matter of right may surely be withheld without wrong. But,

2. When upon the fall of Adam it pleased God so graciously to reveal to him his saving design and the means of it by that eminent seed of the woman, whereof (though those words do carry but an obscure intimation, yet) undoubtedly, he did not leave Adam ignorant of the meaning and intendment of them. And it is as little to be doubted but that Adam did transmit the knowledge of what he knew himself, in so important a matter, to his more immediate posterity. If then they had not been wanting to themselves and their posterity, it must necessarily have been, that there would have been some sufficient knowledge of a Saviour diffused all the world over, wheresoever his posterity had spread itself. But if men have herein been wanting to themselves, is the holy merciful God to be charged with this? If some very bountiful person should confer some great estate, and settle it upon some particular family, and they embezzle and lose it, is this to be charged upon the bountiful benefactor? And again,

3. Men did not only by their voluntary neglect lose the notices that were first thus given to Adam, concerning a Saviour, but they lost the very notions of God himself. So that by their own negligence and malignity, they gradually and universally sunk even into the grossest idolatry; and so by this means, not only lost the opportunity that they had of knowing somewhat how man might have been saved out of his lost and lapsed estate, but they provoked Divine displeasure against them in the highest degree. And so their negligence herein is not only the natural means of their being without such knowledge as they otherwise would have had, but the provoking cause of God's deserting the world in so great a measure, and so generally, as he hath deserted it. And thus doth the apostle plainly state the case, that because they have not been true to that light that was natural and common to them, did not follow the conduct, even of the notices of God that they had, therefore they have been abandoned and given up: "The wrath of God hath been revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." What truth was that? or what men were these? It was natural truth, the natural knowledge of God, that men had as men; and this was the pagan world that was here chiefly spoken of. And for that very reason, because that which was to be known of God in them was so manifest to them, even the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, his eternal power and Godhead, sufficiently to leave them without excuse; yet (as it after follows) they liking not to retain God in their knowledge, therefore he gave them up; as we see, Rom. i. 18, 28. Here is nothing but *Nemesis, just punishment*, and so no cause at all to complain of any injury done to men. But,

4. When yet it pleased God, in order to the revival of the lost state of religion in the world, to form a peculiar people to himself, and there to set up an eminent light (as it were) upon a candlestick, to vouchsafe an express revelation of himself to that people, and to commit to them his oracles, they were so committed to them, not to be confined and hid, but preserved and kept; and that thence, light might be transmitted all round about, which accordingly must of course (if men had not been wanting to themselves) have spread further and further. It was not from any divine appointment, but from the ill spirit that ruled amongst that ill people, and from the prejudice and negligence of their neighbours, that the light they had did not spread and extend further and further, and still further and further, to circulate from nation to nation. It proceeded (I say) from the ill spirit that was among the Jews, who did envy to the rest of the world the knowledge of God, which now, for the present, was peculiar to them; and to the negligence and prejudice of the rest, that they looked after no such things. Of that ill spirit that ruled among the Jews, that is a sad instance, (which I have upon some other occasion told you of,) that when there was one translation of the Old Testament by the seventy elders, enjoined to be made by Ptolemy, and they could not tell how to hinder it, they appointed a solemn fast universally wherever they had any thing at all to do, to lament that the knowledge of God should be so diffused amongst others; and go beyond their own bounds. Wherein, as they were guilty, no doubt, so the rest of the world were accessary too, by their negligence and disaffection to the true knowledge of God, to their own continuing ignorance. And further,

5. That when the Christian records, the books of the New Testament, came to be added to those of the Old, how should it come to pass but only through the general ill temper of men, that Christian knowledge might not be as far extended as commerce was between nation and nation, kingdom and kingdom? Why might not that commodity have been carried as far as gold and silver and precious stones? the price whereof is far above all these, "more precious than rubies," or thousands of gold and silver. And (as I told you formerly) it was never to be expected God should do that by extraordinary means, that might have been done by ordinary. And this being the case, it is little to be expected that God (when men might so easily have transmitted such notices from nation to nation, and those that were of a greater distance, and might have heard more obscurely, of such and such things, might have inquired and sent and laboured to inform themselves) should give remedy to such an evil as this, by an extraordinary course; and when in an ordinary way such knowledge might have been conveyed from country to country, he should have sent an angel from kingdom to kingdom, and from nation to nation, to carry them Bibles. It might have been as well expected that, in Christian countries, where the Bible is come, but a great many persons being illiterate, and can make no use of it, an angel should be sent from house to house to teach their children to read. Again,

6. Where there hath been both a loss of that Christian knowledge that once did obtain, and those very records do (it may be) cease from some parts of the world where they have been, this is still to be imputed to the same cause, the carelessness and negligence of men about their own concernments, even about their greatest concernments, as we are told. It is true, that of latter days, in some parts of the world, where there have been thirty Christians for one pagan, there are now nearly thirty Mahometans for one Christian. Whence is this, but from the wilful degeneracy and revolt of those, amongst whom the Christian name was sometime professed? It would not have been imposed upon any, whether they would or no, to forego their religion,

and to let these sacred records cease from among them, and substitute a fetid, fulsome, ridiculous Alcoran in the room of them. We are not to charge upon God these gross negligences and wickednesses of men. And again,

7. Where these holy books are shut up from people, (as they are generally in the Romish church,) to what is that to be imputed, but to their own carelessness and indifferency and coldness in the concerns of their own souls and of the future state? This is a punishment, a just punishment upon stupid besotted princes and people, that they would be so imposed upon; so absurdly and without pretence; that their priests must lock up all from them, that so they might have the leading of them, the blind leading the blind into the ditch. We are to consider a penal hand in this, as is expressed, 2 Thess. ii. 11. that where the truth is not received in the love of it, there God, in judgment, should "send strong delusions that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned." This is righteous and holy displeasure, and the act and effort of punitive justice for very gross and most provoking wickedness, that a greater value hath not been had and expressed of things so sacred, so precious, and of such concernment to men's souls; that the greater part of the Christian world should suffer itself to be so grossly imposed upon, and cheated out of the very things wherein their very salvation is concerned. Their wickedness in this, did punish itself. And God hath most righteously permitted it to be so. And then,

8. That according to human measures, and even amongst ourselves, the government is not concerned when laws are made, to provide that every particular person should have the particular knowledge of them. Such laws as are of common concernment men are obliged, under penalties, to observe; they are to look after them themselves. The government is not to take care that every particular person, or family, or parish, or town, or country hath this or that particular act of parliament sent to them, or a statute book lodged in every such place. That is not their care, but it is expected, people should so far concern themselves and mind their interests as to acquaint themselves with things, upon which the safety of their lives as well as the common peace doth depend. And yet further,

9. Where ignorance of those great things that are contained in the Holy Scriptures is altogether invincible; and where it was impossible, in a natural way, that such knowledge should come, undoubtedly God will deal with men accordingly. He will only proceed with them according to that light they had; he will never punish them for not having that light which they never had, nor could have. "As many as sin without the law shall perish without the law; and as many as have sinned with the law shall perish by the law:" as Rom. ii. 12. And,

10. In the last place, if any such were any where to be found that did to their utmost improve the light and means of knowledge which they had, (supposing them never to have had what we have from these holy writings,) we do not know what God would have done for their further help in that case. But I doubt instances will not be found of such as have improved the light they had to the uttermost. How far we are from improving as we should and might, that greater light which we have! But God hath his ways open to him. We do not know how he did convey light of old to those that had it before the Scriptures were written; how Job came by his knowledge, and how his friends came by theirs, we do not know. But this is undoubtedly the ordinary, stated means of knowledge where it is vouchsafed; where God doth afford it. If God doth not afford it, he proceeds then by other measures of his own which we know nothing of. But certainly he will always walk punctually according to that rule, that "whosoever hath, to them shall be given, and they shall have more abundantly;" that is, whosoever hath so as to improve what he hath, that useth and enjoys what he hath, and God is pleased to trust him with, God will never be wanting to such. He will always be beforehand with them, as he is never behind-hand with any, according to that known and generally approved saying of that ancient: *Homini facienti quod in se est, Deus non deest: God is never wanting to them that do improve what they possess.* Though he owes them nothing, and whatsoever he doth for them is of grace, he is never wanting to those that with serious diligence trade with and improve their present talents. And I think more needs not be said to that objection.

Objection 2. And it is of less concernment, what might be further objected in the second place. That is, it may seem somewhat more desirable (at least) that these Scriptures had contained things that are of necessity to salvation in a more distinct method, that we might have had (as it were) all the several heads belonging to religion, reduced as in a common place book, to such and such distinct topics, that every one might know whither to go presently for all things that do belong to such and such a head. But,

1. I answer; It is enough to those that consider things modestly, and with that subjection and resignation of spirit that we ought to have, to take notice only that God hath thought another course fitter. And that is surely best which he thinks best. So submissive and resigned ought our minds and understandings to be to the Divine mind. But,

2. Supposing the most accurate method that could be imagined were used in all things, as was suggested, yet however, there would have been a continual use and need of a stated office, to be continued through all the successions of time, purposely for the explaining and for the enforcing of things upon the dull and sluggish minds of men. The state of this apostate world doth most manifestly require it, yea and even with the best, those that are upon recovery, who are in some measure restored out of the common apostacy, they do still need to be continually administered unto. And that being supposed, it is the business of them who are invested with such an office, to be continually searching for others, and labouring diligently to explain things to them, and to lay things together, and to apply them to particular uses and purposes as the variety of cases should need and require. And to add no more,

3. Whereas the bounty and goodness of God hath provided for the inhabitants of this earth, that the bowels of it should be replenished with things of very great usefulness and very great value, as gold, silver, precious stones, and the like, that are dug out of the earth, it might as reasonably be said, Why did not God so order the matter, that upon turning up of the earth, one might have found vessels of gold, flagons and dishes of silver, ready made and formed? and why have we not our rubies and diamonds ready cut and polished, as they are taken out of the earth? These Scriptures do contain all needful truths in the ore, from whence they are to be beaten out. And what! is nothing to be left to the industry and diligence of those that are to be employed here a life-time, in reference to the concernments of their salvation and the affairs of another world? must every one expect that food of this kind should drop into his mouth when, even in reference to the support of this perishing life, it seemed a just and equal law to the universal Lawgiver, that he that would not labour should not eat?

And therefore, now to make some brief *Use* of what hath been said upon this subject. It may be improved several ways.

1. It may very reasonably put us upon *reflection*, what our temper and what our practice hath been and is, in reference to these sacred writings. And,

(1.) Let us reflect, and bethink ourselves: Are they used, are they perused, as so sacred, so important, and necessary things do require to be? Pray let us reflect, Are they much in our hands in our closets? do we lay it as a charge upon ourselves to search the Scriptures? You see it is given as a charge by our Lord himself, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life," John v. 39. Is the reading of them in our families a common practice? You do best know. There is such a thing as family instruction charged upon family masters. They are to be accountable for those under their charge in this very thing. And certainly they that do but use a very ordinary understanding, would soon and easily apprehend, that I who am to maintain the lives of so many persons in my family under my care, by providing food for them for their natural lives, that I who am not to suffer a child or a servant to starve under my roof, must not surely let their souls starve: I must not

let the necessary means of spiritual and eternal life be withheld from them. Let it be considered, Is such a course kept up? If there must be family instruction, this word must be the ground of it, it must be all fetched from hence. And how sad, how unaccountable a case is it, when it shall be more ordinary and familiar to have a news-book (not to say a play-book) in men's hands, and under their eye, than this holy book! But we are to inquire too,

(2.) Not only concerning the reading and perusing of these writings, but concerning the gust, the savour and relish wherewith we do it. With what complacency do we look into and resolve in our hearts those great and deep things of God that are contained and unfolded to us in this book? I would fain know, who of us can assign a reason why David should have a pleasanter relish of the word of God than we? Is it not of as great importance to us, as it could have been to any saint heretofore, to take these sacred truths and doctrines that are contained in this book for our meat and drink? "I found thy words and did eat them," saith the prophet, "and they were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." We have it given us as the common character of a good man, a fearer of the Lord, of old, that the law of God was his delight, and therein he did meditate day and night, Psal. i. 2. Let us but consider, if there be a failure and decay generally among us as to one thing, that is, the want of a savouring and relishing the word of God, the things contained in the sacred writings, whether there be not a matter of threatening abode and import to us in it; for then all our religion is proportionably languishing, and the languishment of it is a continual tendency to its being lost, and continual sickness and languishing is a tendency to death: and in such reflections as these, we should compare present time with former time, so far as it any way comes within the compass of our knowledge, either of what we could either of us have observed ourselves, or what is recorded to us by others. Sure the time was, that the word of God hath been a thing of much higher esteem (I doubt) than at present. I am very apt to think, and do pretty certainly know, that the reading of the Bible in London was a much more common usage than now it is in families and closets. And truly, if there be symptoms of decay upon us in respect of so very important a thing as this is, it looks very threateningly: we may be sure if our esteem grow less of this book, God's esteem doth not grow less of it: he doth not measure by us: and if he have the same estimate and value for it that ever he had, we may fear that he will sometime or other (and we know not how soon) very terribly vindicate the neglect, contempt, and disregard of these sacred records. If he do come to plead his own cause, in this regard, with an untoward generation, I fear it will be a very terrible day: I know not who will live when God doth this. But,

2. This should *exhort* us to several things. As,

(1.) That we do with serious gratitude acknowledge and adore the goodness of God, in intrusting us with such a treasure as these Oracles of his are. I am afraid this is a thing wherein there is a very general neglect and defect. We do not often enough put it into our express thanksgivings, that God hath vouchsafed the great blessing of a Bible among us. I doubt we do not explicitly enough take notice of this, as a matter of gratitude to God, nor so often as we should, that he hath put this book into our hands. And,

(2.) It should exhort us to more frequent and diligent reading of the Scriptures. For what have we them for? And indeed we do but mock God when we give thanks for them, if we use them not. It should be more a business with us; time should be chosen and reserved for it on purpose. We should contrive how to spare time from our common affairs for the perusal of this book. I am afraid that partly between the over-much business of the shop and the exchange, and partly through the no business of the coffee-house and tavern, little or no time is allowed for this important work, the reading and perusing diligently these holy writings.

(3.) And we should be exhorted next, to endeavour to get them written over again in our hearts: that this word may be to us an ingrafted word: that we may have this word of Christ dwelling richly in us: that we may be the epistles of Christ, written not with ink on paper, but with the Spirit of the living God on the fleshly tables of our hearts: otherwise this word cannot but be a witness against us. If there be not a correspondent word within, if there be not an internal correspondent word, the external word must be a standing witness against the frame of our spirits and against our habitual inclination. We then have the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, when it transforms and changes us, and when we are like it, when there is something within us answerable to it, as face answers to face in the water. And,

(4.) It ought, in order to this, further to exhort us to endeavour distinctly to understand it; especially in those great things that do concern the vitals and essentials of religion. And this knowledge will be easy to them that concern themselves to understand. Wisdom is easy to him that hath understanding, that is, that sets his mind to understand, that doth aim at understanding. It must be a design driven and pursued accordingly, that we may get our minds enriched with that knowledge that is wrapt up in these holy writings. And we have greater advantages in order to it, yea much greater, than our forefathers have had, though they have expressed that love to this book, which I am afraid is too little common in our time. How dear was a leaf of the Bible to some of the poor suffering martyrs! But, I say, we have much greater advantage to help us to a distinct understanding of it. How many very useful commentaries upon the Bible are there published among us in the English tongue, which were not in the former time? As particularly the Dutch annotations, and Diodati's annotations, and those that are called the Assembly's annotations and Mr. Poole's, in two volumes, and that lesser and very useful one of Mr. Clarke, single. So that they must owe it to their own great neglect and unconcernedness, who are not furnished with help at hand whereby they may in some measure understand the Bible distinctly as they read it, and know how to refer things to their use from day to day as they go on in that course. And then,

(5.) Lastly, apply it to the several uses it was written for and was designed to serve. You see here in the context, what uses it was intended to serve, and it is said to be profitable for: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" use it to these several purposes, as the case doth from time to time require. And we may add hereunto, what we find in another place, (Rom. xv. 4.) that the things that were written, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Oh! how many a sweet cordial is there in this book! Certainly they cannot be in an uncomfortable state, without a fault, that have such matter of consolation just at hand, and take no notice of it. They that go from day to day in darkness, and complain of their own doubts and fears; and will not be at the pains to consider what there is in this book suitable to the state of their case, and which by faithful application would undoubtedly in time satisfy all unreasonable doubts, and dismiss all causeless fears and make them vanish, must needs be wanting to their own comfort and peace. It is in that respect a light, not only upon account of its instructiveness, but upon account of the pleasantness and consolations thereof. The Scriptures were written that we through patience and comfort of them might have hope. We that are following the conduct of God, and the ducture of that light which shines in this sacred word of his, towards an eternal state of glory, with what erect and raised hearts, with hearts how lifted up in the ways of God, should we hold on our course, as the redeemed ones of him, having that life and immortality in view which are brought to light before our eyes in this Gospel.

And a little to enforce all this, it may not be altogether useless, nay, I think it may be worth our while to tell you a short passage which was not long ago told me by a person, (whose name is well known in London, and I hope savory in it yet, Doctor Thomas Goodwin,) at such time as he was president of Magdalen college in Oxford: there I had the passage from him. He told me that being himself in the time of his youth a student at Cambridge, and having heard much of Mr. Rogers of Dedham in Essex, purposely he took a journey from Cambridge to Dedham,

to hear him preach on his lecture day, a lecture then so strangely thronged and frequented, that to those that came not very early there was no possibility of getting room in that very spacious large church. Mr. Rogers was (as he told me) at that time he heard him, on the subject of discourse which hath been for some time the subject of mine, the Scriptures. And in that sermon he falls into an expostulation with the people about their neglect of the Bible: (I am afraid it is more neglected in our days:) he personates God to the people, telling them, "Well, I have trusted you so long with my Bible: you have slighted it, it lies in such and such houses all covered with dust and cobwebs: you care not to look into it. Do you use my Bible so? well, you shall have my Bible no longer." And he takes up the Bible from his cushion, and seemed as if he were going away with it and carrying it from them; but immediately turns again and personates the people to God, falls down on his knees, crys and pleads most earnestly, "Lord, whatsoever thou dost to us, take not thy Bible from us: kill our children, burn our houses, destroy our goods; only spare us thy Bible, only take not away thy Bible." And then he personates God again to the people; "Say you so? well, I will try you a while longer; and here is my Bible for you, I will see how you will use it, whether you will love it more, whether you will value it more, whether you will observe it more, whether you will practise it more, and live more according to it." But by these actions (as the doctor told me) he put all the congregation into so strange a posture that he never saw any congregation in his life; the place was a mere Bochim, the people generally (as it were) deluged with their own tears: and he told me that he himself, when he got out and was to take horse again to be gone, he was fain to hang a quarter of an hour upon the neck of his horse weeping, before he had power to mount; so strange an impression was there upon him, and generally upon the people, upon having been thus expostulated with for the neglect of the Bible.

And sure, if our neglect of it in our days have not been less, it is a very sad case, if our affliction and resentment of such an evil as this should be apparently and discernibly less.

And nothing will signify our regardlessness of this holy book more, than if we do not strictly regulate ourselves by it as to our thoughts, and as to all our deportment. For pray, under what notion do we own this book, but as a rule to guide us to our end? how to glorify God and how to enjoy him for ever? It will be a plain testimony against us that this book hath not the esteem which is due to it, when it hath not the use made of it that it was purposely designed for. And oh! let that be but considered, its use is to be a rule for us. Bethink we ourselves thereupon, whether we do really regulate our thoughts, our hearts, our affections, and our passions by it. "I dare not allow such and such thoughts, I dare not allow such and such motions of spirit within myself, for the Bible is against them." Let us but consider, whether we use to lay this rule to our minds and spirits, and to our walkings and actions, so as to conform all to it. If not, it is impossible we can value it according to its true worth, for it is valuable but under the notion as it is a rule, and it can never regulate our external conversation as it should, if it do not regulate our spirit first. We must consider that is the great difference between the government of God and any human government whatsoever. His government is primarily mental, it is a government first exercised about minds; and this word is the instrument of his government as to them. This word of his "is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And if we do not labour to get our spirits, our inward man, habitually subjected to the governing power of this word, it doth nothing upon us to any purpose; it is lost upon us, as to all the great purposes for which it should serve us. But is not this too apparently our common case, that if there be a strong inclination to this or that thing or way, or if there be a passion up that we have a mind to indulge, this shall signify more with us, to carry us this way or that, than a thousand texts of Scripture? You may as well, many times, oppose your breath to the Thames to turn the course of it, as to oppose the word of God to these inclinations. But is this to make use of the Scripture as our rule, when the plain design of it lies against such and such habitual inclination, or against indulgence to such and such a passion, and we never apply it to such a purpose? If we did but get the authority of the great God (whose word this is) to be (as it were) enthroned within us, so as that our souls might stand in continual awe of him, the remembrance of a text of Scripture would presently allay passion, govern appetite, and check inclination, and so would come, with ease and pleasure, to be to us a governing rule of all the affairs and actions of our lives.

And so I have done, as to this great subject of the Scriptures, which was proper next, after we had asserted to you the existence of a Deity, that is, of an intelligent Ruler and Maker of this world, to whom such a word as this might certainly be ascribed as his word; that then we might come from this word of his to have more distinct apprehensions concerning him. It was necessary, first, to know that there was one intelligent, perfect, all-comprehending, eternal Mind, the original and Author of all things, without which it would have been a vain thing to speak of the word of God. We must know first, whence such a word was to proceed, and that being once understood and known, then we may look back again upon him, and such things through the light of the word come more clearly to be revealed to us concerning him, than we can otherwise, by mere light of nature, search or find out. And so to such things we shall go on, in our intended course, as the Lord shall enable and direct.

LECTURE XI.*

James ii. 19.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

IN pursuance of that design we have had in hand, of explaining and asserting to you the principal heads and doctrines of our religion, we have (you know) already been discoursing to you about the object of it, the eternal, ever-blessed God; and concerning the measure and rule of it, the holy Scriptures, which we have proved to be the word of God: and that method it was necessary to follow, of evincing the being or existence of God to you first, before we could reasonably go about to prove the Scriptures to be his word. For of nothing there are no predicates; nothing can be affirmed of nothing. It were vain to allege the authority of this or that prince's edict to one that should not believe that there was ever such a prince: but having evinced to you the existence of God, and that these Scriptures are his word, purposely written to reveal him more fully to us, his nature, and his mind and will concerning what we are to believe and practice, in order to our pleasing and our enjoying of him; it is now highly reasonable to expect from these Scriptures, the discovery of such things further, concerning him, and our duty towards him and expectations from him, as we could not otherwise have known, as whereof we could not by other means have had as to some things; and as to other things, not so distinct or certain knowledge: for otherwise these Scriptures should not answer their avowed end, and must indeed be supposed to be written in vain. There are things that do concern even God himself, which is of great importance to us to be acquainted with, that either we should have had no knowledge at all of, without these Scriptures, or should not have known so clearly or not so easily; some of us (it may be) not at all: such as were less capable, or less inclined, or less willing to use their own reason in thought, and to discern a train of consequences, and the force of them, and how to make things that are in themselves evidenceable, evident to ourselves in an argumentative way. It is a great matter of

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advantage to have more of necessary things made known to us, and to have those things which it is necessary we should know, made known in an easy and less laborious way, without our more toilsome search: or to have it said, on the authority of the great God, this and this you are to believe, and this and this you are to do; to have that which is to be the food of our souls, not to be hunted for, but even brought to our hands; this is a very great advantage.

Now among some of those things that do concern God himself, and which it is of absolute necessity to be acquainted with, and in order whereto we are to have a clear light, and, for the most, their whole light, from the Scriptures, there are especially two which I shall instance in and insist upon. That is,—the unity of the Godhead, and —the trinity therein. And for the former of these, the unity of the Godhead, we may very fitly insist upon that, as far as is needful, from this Scripture. In which there are two parts. The first, approving and justifying the believing of this great truth, that God is but ONE: "Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well:" the other, reproving and condemning the ineffectual belief of it: "the devils also believe and tremble."

I. I shall insist on the former of these—That the Godhead is but ONE, or there is but ONE GOD. "This (saith the apostle) thou believest, thou doest well in it. Thou believest truly and as the matter is." I do not propound this to you as a Scripture doctrine, upon that account, as if it were not at all demonstrable in a rational way; but shall first let you see how very expressly the Scripture doth testify to us this truth touching the unity of the Godhead. And then secondly, shall show what rational evidence it admits of besides.

1. As to the Scripture testimony about this, it could be in nothing more express. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord:" (Deut. vi. 4.) a passage quoted in the Gospel as you find, Mark xii. in several verses of that chapter, in which it is enlarged upon. One of the scribes (verse 28.) came to our Lord, and perceiving there were reasonings between him and some others, he asks, "Which is the first commandment?" Jesus answered him, "The first commandment is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord thy God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The scribe said unto him, "Well, master, thou hast said the truth, for there is but one God, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, like a man that had a mind, (as the word signifies,) had a presentness of mind, an understanding, a good sound understanding, about him, he highly approves of what he said, and saith, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." There are many expressions very great and august, spoken like a God about this matter, in the prophecy of Isaiah, in several chapters of it. If you look to the 43rd chapter, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servants whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me, and that ye may understand that I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I am the Lord; and besides me there is no Saviour," verses 10, 11. And in the 44th chap. ver. 8. "Fear ye not, neither be afraid; have I not told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are my witnesses, is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God, I know not any." "I that can transmit the beams of mine eye through this vast and boundless inane, and look round about me every where, can see nothing like another God in view; I know no such, and I know you cannot know more than I." So you have the same thing inculcated in the 45th chapter, in sundry verses of it: "I am God, and there is none else; and the Saviour, and there is none beside me:" most pleasantly conjoining the notion of God and Saviour together, over and over, that when we know this one God, we may know him too under the pleasant notion of a Saviour. No discovery of him could be more suitable or more grateful to poor creatures sunk and lost in misery as we are. And so, you know, the apostle puts both these together, the "one God and one Mediator," revealing to us this truth —the unity of the Godhead in conjunction with what is most opposite and suitable with the state of our case, in that 1 Cor. viii. 6. "To us there is but one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ." And 1 Tim. ii. 5. "There is one God and one mediator, the man Christ Jesus." And that place is famous, 1 John v. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." That oneness can mean nothing there, but in the Deity, in the Godhead.

2. But this matter is very capable of very clear rational evidence too; which, because it is not obvious to every one at first sight, I would only help you herein a little, not doubting but you will apprehend things to be very plain to you, when you hear them, which might have been out of your thoughts or sight before: both what hath been already proved, and what is otherwise evident concerning God, will prove to us the unity of the Godhead, and also what is obvious to our common notice concerning the state of the creation. It is by the creation we come to have the first notices of the Creator, as you have heard. That is, of the invisible power and Godhead by the things that are made. Now whether you look to the Maker, the Creator of all made things, or whether you look to the state of those things themselves, you will find clear rational evidence that the Godhead is but *one*, or that God can be but *one*.

(1.) Consider what hath been made plain, or is otherwise evident, concerning God himself, the very notion of God: thence it will appear, that the Deity admits not of multiplication, or that there can be more Gods than one. As,

[1.] It hath been proved, and is in itself evident, that God is a self-original, a self-existing Being. He is such a Being as that he doth not owe it to another, that he is, but only to himself. He only is in being, because such is the peculiar excellency of his being, as to which it is altogether repugnant and impossible ever not to be. He exists necessarily of and from himself only. Now necessary self-existing, uncaused being can be but one, for whatsoever is uncaused is unlimited, all limitation proceeding from a cause; and of unlimited being there can be no more than one, for if there were two, one must limit the other, and so neither would be unlimited. And,

[2.] It belongs to the notion of God, considered in reference to other things, to be the very first in himself. He is uncaused towards the creature: he is the first Cause. Now nothing is plainer than that there can be but one first.

[3.] To whom it belongs to be the first of all things, to him it belongs also to be the last, and it is as evident there can be but one last: and as to these things that are so plain, I do not need to insist, but just lay them before you. Therefore,

[4.] It belongs to the notion of God, as he is God, to be the best of all beings. But there can be but one best good, in the eminent and transcendent sense; and so there can be but one God, as the matter is in itself obvious, and is taken up by our Saviour, in that Luke xviii. 19. "None is good but one, that is God," or saving God. Again,

[5.] It belongs to the very being of God to be omnipotent, almighty, and it is most evident, that there can be but one omnipotent; for supposing another omnipotent, that could do all things, then he could cause that other not to be able to do any thing, otherwise he were not omnipotent. And if he could do that, then the former were not omnipotent, but plainly impotent, absolutely impotent; that is, not able to do any thing.

[6.] And lastly, that which sums up all; it belongs to the notion of God to be the absolutely universal, perfect Being: to comprehend in himself all perfection: that is, either formally, that which is his own, or appropriate to his own being; or eminently, that which is to be found any where throughout the creation. Now universal perfection, or all perfection, can have but one seat. For there can be but one all; there cannot be more than all; and all perfection is comprised in the Divine Being. The very notion of God imports all perfection, signifies him to be the Fountain of whatsoever can come under the notion of perfection; and which is perpetually springing from himself, and (when it is his pleasure to communicate) communicating from himself thereof to his creatures. And,

(2.) If you look upon the state of things in the creation, you will find that most plainly to signify to us the unity of the Godhead. As,

[1.] In the natural world; the order that is every where to be observed and seen; that speaks the unity, oneness, and oneliness of the Agent, that had the forming and continual management of the affairs of all this creation. It was impossible there could be that order which is every where to be observed in the natural world, the heaven and earth, sun, moon, and stars, with the constant succession of day and night, summer and winter; and that variety of creatures, with the due order still preserved in that great variety even here upon earth. I say it is impossible this could be, if that mighty Agent that made, and that overrules all, were not one, and *only* one: as the Psalmist takes notice, Psal. cxix. 9. Having spoken of heaven and earth before, he saith, "They continue to this day according to thy ordinance, for all are thy servants." "They are all in a stated subserviency to thee, as the only one that dost moderate, and dispose, and order all things, according to thine own pleasure; and so they remain steadfast and settled for ever." And,

[2.] Even in the intellectual world, the intelligent world: consider the state of things there. Indeed there there might be an objection, or from thence; which objection will be easily improved into an argument to the purpose I am speaking to: that is, that in the intellectual world, there is so great disorder, as we see, such confusions among men, and proceeding from that which we find to have been in a higher order of intelligent creatures, the angels that fell. But this, I say, is improvable into an argument, in that they fell, and are in a fallen state, those angels and the generality of men, it shows, that all this disorder and confusion hath come from their receding from the *one God*. They therefore came into that disorder and confusion, (which is the sad object of our daily contemplation, whenever we use our thoughts about such a thing,) having broken off themselves from the one God: from thence doth this disorder proceed; and, considering these two sorts of intelligent creatures, that lie under our notice, (to confine our eyes to the children of men,) they are either such as are in a state of apostacy still, or they are such as are in their return, and upon recovery, coming back to God in Christ. For those that are in a state of apostacy still, as they remain apostate and off from God, they make this world that they inhabit a hell of confusion to themselves, which shows, that the disorder is by their breaking themselves from the one God, the centre of all virtue, and of all order thereupon. But for those that are returning, that are coming back to God, under the conduct of Christ, that are in the exercise of repentance towards God, according as their minds are changed, according as that great work of renovation obtains, and takes place in them, so it becomes more and more their habitual sense, to own, even from their very hearts and souls, the ONE GOD. Then this is their sense, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord." To dwell with God as my only one, (as in that, Psalm xxvii. 4. And as in Psalm lxxiii. 25.) "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom on earth do I desire besides thee?" It is very true indeed, that in the apostate part of the world, very great multitudes are quite wrong in their notions about this thing, as the polytheism of the pagan world, (of the most ignorant and sottish part of it, though the wiser part, even of that too, have always acknowledged one supreme God, looking upon the rest as so many ministering gods, meaning, no doubt, the same thing that we do by angels,) doth show. But where once the light and grace of the Gospel do obtain, in conjunction, there is not only a rectitude of motion about this matter, but there is a correspondent sense of heart. "One thing have I desired; I can dwell no where but with God, with any content: and whom have I in heaven, but thee?" All renewed senses do presently return to this one, all are gathered back to one centre in one, in this one they all meet; they no sooner begin to live, but all their desires, and all their aims, and all their tendencies are directed the same way, to this one centre. And therefore now to make some *Use* of this.

1. We learn from it, the insupportable misery of those that have no relation to, nor interest in, this one God. God is but one. "Oh! then," may every such wretched soul say, "what shall become of me, who have no part in him, no portion in him?" There is but one God to save thee, and thou hast nothing to do with him; but one God to satisfy thee, and thou hast nothing to do with him; but one to save thee, and if he will destroy thee, who will save thee? If there be but one, and he be set against thee, if he be thine enemy; if this be the state of thy case, that thou liest open to the destructive wrath of this one God, who shall save thee? There is but one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: (as it comes in after, James iv. 12.) and there is but one to satisfy thee; thou wast lost for want of being satisfied by a suitable good, if thou wert never so safe from any external, any vindictive evil. There is but one good, that is God; no proportionable good, nor adequate good besides, no good that can fill up the capacity of the soul. How may such a creature go bemoaning itself in so sad a state of its case! "There is but one good throughout the whole universe of being, and I have nothing to do with that one; I have no part there."

2. As the misery of such is insupportable, so truly, their sin is as inexcusable; for there is but one God that claims obedience and duty from thee. The case is in this easy way to be understood. Let it be considered, you have not one to command, and another to countermand; one to bid, and another to forbid. There is one God; you know there is but one; you believe there is but one. No man (it is true) can serve two masters, who should both lay claim to supreme power over him. No one can serve two, but sure one may serve one, when there is but one, and his mind is express and plain; therefore the sin of such is altogether inexcusable. Thou hast but one God to worship; and what! not worship him. But one God to love, but one to fear, but one to trust; but one object for thy adoration, one object for thy expectation; and thou art to do him homage every day, in both together; both in adoring him and expecting from him. And what! to rob this one God of the glory, the service which he claims, and which thou mightest pay and render to him! There is no exception against it, no counter-claim against this claim of his.

3. We further learn hence, how high and great is the privilege of those, that do belong to God, in that he is but one; they do not need to be divided among many, and to have their hearts distracted within them, "Whither shall I go? to whom shall I betake myself?" Their privilege is great, upon this account, with respect both to their knowledge of this one God, and their application to him, the former whereof leads to the latter.

(1.) In respect to their knowledge of him; it is a very great privilege, that the eye of their mind and soul is called to one, directed to one; here is eternal life summed up (as it were) in one glance. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent;" to know him as he is revealed, and as he is to be conversed with, through his Son; and in what a transport do we find the disciples, upon this account, it being the great business and design of our blessed Lord to reveal the Father to poor souls. "Show us the Father and it sufficeth," say they. Saith he, "You do know the Father, in that you have known me," in that 14th John. Then saith one of them, Judas, not Iscariot, (no not he I warrant you, he had not a heart to savour any such thing,) "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" Oh! how lamentable is it to think (as if they had said) of the sad state of the blinded world, how little they know, how obscure and dark their notices are, and how corrupted and depraved, about the one Godhead. But Christ tells them that in manifesting himself he manifested the Father too. And "Oh! (say they,) whence is this to us, that we should have this manifestation when it is not afforded to the world, is not made common to the universality of men?" And,

(2.) In respect of application to him; oh, how great is the privilege not to be put to worship stocks and stones for deities, and to pray to a god that cannot save. When we think of the inanimate, senseless gods which the blind nations do trust in and worship, we have then just cause to think with ourselves, "Oh, how unlike to them is the portion of Jacob! He is the Former of all things. Our God

hath made the heavens, and doth whatsoever he will, there above and here below."

4. We hence see what obligation is upon us to singleness of heart. The Deity wherewith we have most of all to do, finally, terminatively to do, is single, is but one. How to be abhorred a thing, hereupon, must a double heart be, a heart—and a heart! For a single God, how suitable is a single heart! There is not for us a God—and a God. And what should we do then for a heart—and a heart? The whole must go to the whole, one to one. When our Saviour had been telling us, (Matt. vi. 24.) "No man can serve two masters," he points us back to what we find there in the same context; that if the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light. But if the eye be evil, (which implies that a double heart is an evil heart,) then all is in darkness. And saith he, "If the very light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" When our eye looks with one direct and undivided view towards the one God, here the soul is all replenished with light, clear and vital light, that is transfused through it. But multiplicity and darkness come all to one. If we do not look with a single eye to that one single Being, where all glory and all blessedness for poor souls reside; but are looking to other things, and departing from this one, we are presently lost in multiplicity, and see many things under that notion, as if our good lay here, or as if the prime duty lay here; it is all one as seeing nothing, as good to know nothing of any God at all, as to know many gods, or to consider many under that notion. And again,

5. We see hereupon how possible the most entire and intimate union with God is with sincere souls. To those that are sincere, if he be but one, how entire and intimate may the union be between one and one? When we bring to him a single soul, a soul full of simplicity, uprightness, and sincerity, which points only at him as the one God, he being but one, and we but one in the intention and aim of our souls, how entire and intimate may this union be! That which some pagans have expressed by that nearest and closest and most intimate touch of the centre; centre to centre; so (have some of them said) are souls to apply themselves inwardly to God; the one God joining centre with them. And it is a mighty solace to think of it; that whereas the felicity of a soul doth so absolutely depend upon the most near and intimate union with God, that which is so necessary is so possible. It is necessary to me, in order to my happiness and well-being, that I be most intimately and entirely united with God; and since he is but one, if I be one in the intent and bent of my soul towards him, it is not more necessary than possible. For observe how the scribe, that puts that question to our Lord in that forementioned Mark xii. understands this conjunction, when our Lord answered him, what was the first and great commandment; namely, "the first and great commandment is, that God is but one, and that there is none other God but he, and that therefore we should love him with all the heart," he replies, "Master, thou hast said well, for there is but one God;" and our Lord, it is said, observed, that he answered like a man of sense, like a man of understanding, like an intelligent man. There lies the connexion, "therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, because the Lord our God is one God, and there is none other but he." And,

6. We may hence collect the mighty obligation there is upon Christians, to unity with one another; to be united one with another. Those several unities you read of Ephes. iv. are all directed to this one purpose, and this is the prime and most fundamental of all the rest, "There is but one God;" and therefore are all those related to him, and that bear his name, to be but one. It cannot be said, one Christian hath one God, and another hath another God; but all have but one God; so that it is impossible there can be any so great reasons for disunion among Christians, those that are sincere, that have vital union with God in Christ, as there are for their union. Whatsoever pretence there can be for disunion, or for distinct communion, the reason is unspeakably greater for union. By how much doth God outweigh all things else, infinite reason is there for oneness in communion throughout, as he, with whom they have all a common union is infinite. But the things wherein they differ from one another, are most minutely finite, and even as nothing, in comparison of this one thing, wherein they must all (whether they will or not) agree. And thereupon indeed, there cannot be a greater iniquity in the Christian church (which is the community of living Christians) than when they do usually make distinct communions. This, I must tell you, is the very heart and centre of all antichristianism, the first remarkable thing in the apostacy of the Christian church, when it began to degenerate, that is, the making of distinct communions, or making of other terms of communion, than Christ had made by the evangelical law. This was the very heart of all antichristianity, when men would take upon them to make distinct boundaries and terms of communion, which should be larger than Christ would have made, or narrower than Christ had made; to admit men upon such terms as his rules would admit none; and exclude men on such terms as his rules would exclude none; this is the first thing, the summary and most comprehensive thing, in all antichristianity. Then the Christian church first began to be antichristian, when it came to this, to make other terms of communion than Christ had made by his own law. And indeed, the iniquity of it is intolerable, if it be considered; for under what notion are any to be received into the community of Christians, but under the notion of persons visibly united to God in Christ, and so instated into the blessings of the Gospel, and so entitled to everlasting blessedness in God, procured for them by the general Redeemer? Whereupon, to make new terms of communion, larger or narrower than Christ made, is to make a new covenant, to make a new Gospel; it is to make new terms of everlasting life and death; and so to overturn and overthrow all things, that are most essential to a Christian church, or to the Christian religion, or any thing of religion in the world. It would strike at all, if men may shape their communion, according to their own fancy, when they are to shape it according to the evangelical law. Those that we believe to have vital union with God in Christ, or whom we ought to believe have so; we that, with a sincere mind, look upon persons by Gospel measures, and consider them as those who have visible characters of true vivid Christianity upon them, ought to run into communion with them as such, and only such. This is Christ's measure, and Christ's rule, and so communion can be but one, and to offer to make it diverse and distinct, is to make a new gospel, and a new Christ, and a new religion throughout. Indeed it is a bold thing; for it is to make new terms of life and death. It is presumptuous enough to put the divine stamp upon this or that truth of ours, or this or that duty (as we count it) of our own; it is a great presumption: but unspeakably greater, to make new terms of life and death; for every truth, or every duty, are not parts of the terms of life and death. There is many a truth that is not necessary for a man to believe, under pain of damnation; and many a duty a man may be ignorant of, and so not bound to do, upon pain of damnation. But the terms upon which Christians are to hold communion one with another, are such to which we are bound under that penalty, or which are to be looked upon as entitling them to be interested in salvation, or exempted from damnation; and so to make new terms of communion, is to make new terms of life and death. But blessed be God, though this hath been too little considered for above forty years past, God is awakening his people, to consider it now. And I look upon that to be the first step towards the restitution of the Christian church, and the recovering of it out of the terrible apostacy in which it hath lain for a thousand years, and upwards. This, I say, is the first step towards it, to make those the terms of union and communion in the Christian church, which God in Christ hath made. And when that once comes to obtain generally, then we shall find the spirit of the body (for there is but one body and one spirit) diffusing and influencing itself through the body, and making it lively, a kind of resurrection from the dead. It may further,

7. Be collected, that our encouragement is great, as to what expectation we may have, concerning the issue of things, since God is but one. That is, concerning the issue which things shall drive to here in this world, and concerning their ultimate and final issue in the other world, it cannot but be good and happy; for God is but one, who in his Christ is the universal and only Ruler of all

this world. If the kingdom of God in Christ were divided, it would come to nothing; but it is not divided, it is all in one hand, who hath the ordering and disposing of the times and seasons, as seems good to him, and he doth every thing with that profound wisdom that cannot err, and that mighty power that cannot be withstood. And since the most perfect wisdom, and most absolute power, do belong to that one, and all affairs do lie in one hand, the issue will certainly be good. I cannot say it will be good to us, according to our fancy and out sense of things, but it must be, in itself, good. The kingdom is not divided, there is but one God, and one Christ, who governs this apostate world by his own right, as God, and by a right that he hath devolved upon him, as the Mediator. And therefore, never doubt concerning the issue of things, let them look never so horribly, and with never so confused an aspect; all will do well, for all is in the hand of one God.

And then, as to the final state, what transports should we be in, to think, when all that belongs to this one God shall meet in this one God, the many sons brought to glory together, when God shall be all in all, one in all, one diffusing a vital, satisfying, beautifying influence through all, through the whole community, that relates to him, and is united to him, all (as it were) losing themselves in the one God, not in the natural sense, but in the moral; as morality comprehends duty and felicity both together, and the very Scripture expressions that speak of God's being all in all, doth imply this distinction, for otherwise he could not be all in all, if there were not a created all which he replenisheth with his own fulness. "All in all," is not as if all being were to be reserved and swallowed up again into the fountain Being, and that the blessed should lose their individuality; no, no such thing, the very words and the nature of the thing are repugnant to that, but when that all of holy ones shall be gathered about the central good, and be replenished continually, perpetually, fully and everlastingly from thence, oh! how satisfying then shall we experience the truth and sweetness of this thing, —that the Godhead is but *one*.

And this is enough as to the first thing which we have to consider in the text, "thou believest there is one God, thou doest well." The belief of this is approved and justified.

LECTURE XII.*

II. But then the ineffectual believing of it is reproved and condemned; to believe it with such a kind of notional faith as the devils believe it with. The former was the main thing for which I pitched upon this Scripture, but this latter I shall not overlook; it having so great an aptitude with it to help and enforce the right improvement of the former. That is,—the *ineffectual* belief of the Unity of the Godhead, which the apostle doth, in this expression, designedly animadvert upon, may be easily collected from his present scope, which is to show what kind of faith that is which must justify us; not a notional dead faith, such as lets the soul wherein it is remain unchanged, such as works not within, such as leaves the soul just as it was. You may see this scope fully represented to this purpose in the 14th verse, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" can that idle faith, that unworking faith that effects nothing, can that save him? "I appeal to you, (as if he had said,) whether it can." He doth not say it cannot, but he doth appeal to them whether it can or no; and it is true, that manner of interrogation doth deny that it can, more pungently: that is always the intent of questions or interrogatories, put in the room of affirmations or negations, to deny or affirm more smartly or with more pungency than a bare affirmation or negation would have done. It is an appeal to the common light and conscience of the person spoken to. Can such a faith save? And then he comes at length, in prosecution of this scope, to this particular truth. I may not now run over with you the whole thread of this discourse; but immediately before the words of the text, he urgeth this, "A man may say, Thou hast faith and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works;" that is, if thou canst show me any thing that is worth that name. But I for my part "will show thee my faith by my works," as knowing it can never significantly or to purpose be shown otherwise. And then he comes to this particular case, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble." If thou hast no other faith, in this point of the one God's existence, but the devils' faith; nay, if thine fall short of such a faith; dost thou think it will save thee? This is the meaning pursuantly to the present scope. His great question is, what faith will finally save; and for resolving of it, his great business is to evince and make out, that there must be some intervening effects in order to that final salvation, for which the faith that will save must have a proportionable efficacy. If it did not work those intervening immediate effects, it would not bring about the end, salvation. And so the truth that now remains, to be spoken to from this latter part of the verse, you have it plainly in view thus—That the ineffectual belief of the one God's existence, or such a belief of it as doth not beget in the soul proportionable dispositions towards God, will no more save a stupid man than a trembling devil.—And to speak briefly and usefully (as much as is possible) to this, it will be requisite to show—what effects or dispositions our faith of the one God's existence should work in men—to open to you what it doth work in the devils, and—to show, that if it do not its proper work upon men, it will no more save men than devils.

1. What it ought to work, what impressions the faith of the one God's existence should make upon men. The impressions it ought to make upon men, must be measured and judged of by the state of their case, wherein it is different, and represented to them as different, from that of the devils. That is, that though they have been in an apostacy from God, their sovereign and rightful Lord, as the devils have been, yet he is reconcileable to men, when he is not to the devils: and where the Gospel comes, it shows distinctly how, and in what way, and upon what terms, he is reconcileable. The belief then of the one God's existence, you may easily apprehend what it effects upon this supposal of the case. There is but one to whom I owe obedience as my Sovereign; to him I must subject myself. There is but one, from whom I can expect blessedness; a portion and interest in him I must seek. I have hitherto been in an apostacy from him, I have hereby violated the bounds of my duty to him, and forfeited all interest in him; but I find there is a remedy to be given to this case, and through the Redeemer, God is reconcileable; he recalls me to my duty, he offers to restore me to my interest. It is plain then, what impressions should be made, to wit, of "repentance towards God, and (upon discovery made of him) faith in our Lord Jesus Christ:" a disposition to come back to God, through Christ, with a heart full of wonder, full of gratitude, full of love, ready to be devoted, and subject again: and so to do all that can be done on our part, or to comply with all that is required from us, in order to the reinstating of things between God and us, and setting all right again. But,

2. What impression is there made on devils, by the belief of the one God's existence? That one word "tremble" tells us most significantly. They "believe and tremble." Their belief strikes them so, that they are shaken by it: just as the sea with a violent wind, that tosses the waves this way and that. The *fremitus maris* is that which this word doth express, the tumultuation of the sea, as tossed by violent winds. Such an impression doth the belief of the one God's existence make and leave upon devils: that is, it stirs those violent passions in them, which we must suppose the view of the one God, in his terrible majesty and glory, is apt to raise in his creatures, in their state who are apostatized, and revolted from him, and know there is no redeemer for them, that God will not be reconciled to them, and they themselves have no disposition to seek reconciliation with him. That is, such passions as these: the passion of hatred: every view they have of the one God

* Preached March 29th, 1691.

in his majesty and glory, stirs up their enmity, and the oftener they view it, the more they hate it, and especially considered under the notion of just and holy. It cannot but stir the passion of envy, looking on him under the notion of happy: it cannot but move their dread and horror concerning him, under the notion of almighty, not to be resisted, not to be withstood. And then it stirs up the passion of despair too, considering themselves as none of his match, and that they are never to expect that he will yield to them, as they know they can never conquer him. But,

3. Why is a stupid man no more to expect salvation from the ineffectual faith of the one God's existence, than a forlorn trembling devil? That men have been in an apostacy from God, as well as devils, is plain to us all. That death, that is, eternal death, is the proper wages of that sin by which they have apostatized, that is plain to us all too; why should not an apostate man therefore lie under the just wrath of God, as well as an apostate devil? All that can be said in the case is, that Christ hath died for men and not for devils: here is all that can be alleged. And so we need do no more for the clearing of this matter further, than only to consider what alteration this makes in the case; and in order thereto, I will lay down sundry things that I reckon very plain, and such as do carry their own evidence with them.

(1.) As, that there is no natural connexion between the death of Christ and the salvation of a sinner. These two things are not naturally connected, the death of Christ and the salvation of a sinful man. It is plain and obvious in itself, that there is no natural connexion; these things do not naturally touch one another.

(2.) Therefore there can be no connexion at all between them but such as shall be ordinate or made, there cannot be any connexion, without its being made, between the death of Christ and the salvation of any man.

(3.) There can be no pretence of any such made connexion, but such as the Gospel constitution makes, that is, made between the death of Christ and the salvation of any man, but what the Gospel hath made by its constitution.

(4.) The Gospel doth make no connexion between the death of Christ and the salvation of any sinner, without intervening faith. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Gospel makes no other connexion between that death to which he gave up his own Son, and our having, any of us, everlasting life, but upon the supposal of an intervening faith.

(5.) That faith which the Gospel requires for this purpose, it describes and tells us what it is; it describes it by distinguishing characters; it tells us, it is such a faith as overcomes the world, 1 John v. 4. It tells us it is such a faith as by which the hearts of men are turned to the Lord; "Many believed and turned to the Lord," Acts xi. 21. It tells us, it is such a faith, as "is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" (Heb. xi. 1.) that faith that conquers one world, and reveals another. That faith (I say) which the Gospel requires for this purpose, to wit, of the salvation of sinners, by the Redeemer, it doth also describe, and tells us what it is. Whereupon,

(6.) Not to have that faith which the Gospel doth so describe is, in the Gospel estimate, to have no faith. He that hath not this faith is an unbeliever, still an unbeliever. As when we speak of having any thing (whatsoever it be) that is necessary for this or that end or purpose, it is not the name of that thing, the misapplied name of that thing, that will serve the end or purpose, but it is plain, only the thing itself will do it. It is true, you may call painted bread by the name of bread; you may call the picture of a loaf, a loaf, but it is not painted bread that will nourish you, nor is it the notion of Gospel faith, or the name of that faith misapplied, that will save you. They who have not the faith which the Gospel requires, have no faith *quoad hoc*, that will serve *this* purpose, because that faith which is so and so described, it requires as necessary for this purpose of saving. And therefore,

(7.) Lastly; They which have not this faith, being thereupon still unbelievers; that is, they are unbelievers in reference to this faith; they have none of that faith that the Gospel requires in order to salvation; they must accordingly have the unbeliever's portion, and the portion of unbelievers and devils is all one. Compare Luke xii. 46. with Matt. xxv. 41. In the first it is, "Let such a one have his portion with unbelievers:" and then consider that they who fall under such a doom and condemnation at last, are condemned to that "fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels," as it is in the latter place. So that let a man believe never so much this one thing, (which among the rest it is needful he should believe in order to salvation,) to wit, the one God's existence; but it doth not work upon his soul, impresseth him not, altereth him not; it can no more save him than it will save the devil.

Yea, and it might be added, that the Gospel constitution, in this case, making such a faith necessary, doth not only speak the pleasure of the Legislator, but it speaks most consentaneously to the reason of the thing, and with the greatest advantage. Here is reconciliation offered to sinful men; but there is none offered to the devil; in this respect then (though I do not say absolutely in all respects) their guilt is greatest. That one who is no way suitably affected with that discovery which is made to him of God, considered with reference to the state of his case, and the Gospel dispensation under which he is; such a one as doth in this respect remain unchanged, his heart unaltered, not won, not turned to God; lies under greater guilt than the devils themselves do lie.

Therefore now to make some brief *Use* of this. Hence,

1. We learn, that it is a supposable thing, that persons living under the Gospel, professed Christians, (for the apostle speaks to such here,) may be no more duly and suitably affected with the discovery that is made to them of the one God, than the very devils. This is not an unsupposable thing, that man may have the representation of God which the Gospel affords, superadded to all that is natural, and be no more suitably affected therewith than a mere devil, this is a truly supposable case. And that it is a case to be supposed, a thing that may be, should strike all our hearts with just solicitude hereupon. May it be? And what! Is it not so with me? Have I not lived all this while amidst that light that reveals the one God, unaltered, unchanged, unimpressed, just as I should have been, if there had been no such light, no such discovery? And again,

2. We may infer, that persons may be in a very great measure like the devil that do very seldom think of him; nay, (it may be,) do think there is no such creature. It is very likely that this sort of persons whom the apostle here speaks to, with such smartness and acrimony, might very little think of the devil till they met with this epistle, till they were so put in mind. This may very well be. Persons may be very much akin to the devil in the temper and complexion of their minds, when they very little think of him, or of any such matter. And they are most of all like him that are most positive in their disbelief of any such sort of creatures as devils are. That piece of revived modern Sadduceism goes now, with many, for a great piece of wit and learning. And a very strange thing it is, that we should have had among us a clearer light than the greatest part of the world have had, to make us more ignorant and unapprehensive of things that are of very great concern to us; clearer than the pagan world have had; and yet how many things do we find discoursed concerning the devil, among their poets and philosophers, that there are such a sort of middle creatures between the gods (the supreme God at least) and men, and that these are distinguished into two orders, of good and bad. Nothing more frequent in the writings of pagans, than that there are the good genii and *cacodæmones:* some of them seem not to have been ignorant, however they came by the knowledge, of the apostacy of the devils, and of their being thrown down from their happy state above, into very great darkness and misery. But it seems, our having of clearer light, and more express discoveries of things relating to an invisible world, than pagans had, hath served only to make a great many of us a great deal more ignorant, and less apprehensive of these things, and more insolent in the belief of them, than they. But it is strange that they who are so very like the

devil, should be of all others most unapt to own or apprehend that there are any such creatures, or any such sort of creatures. But,

3. We may infer, that it is not strange, when the cause is so very like between men and devils, that their doom should be so like also; that we cannot think it strange, that we should remain and be left under that doom and condemnation which sin did in itself subject them to; who when God hath made overtures to them, to distinguish them from these evil spirits, will not be distinguished, but rather choose to sort themselves with devils than with returning souls, souls that are willing to return to God through Christ.

We see the terrible estate of devils, that they cannot own the one God's existence without trembling. A frightful thought it is to them, to have the eternal Being always in view, that is, what he is necessarily, without variableness or shadow of turning: they cannot nullify his being, they cannot shake his throne, they cannot alter his nature; the glorious, bright, majestic object is always in view, and they can never look towards it without dread and astonishment. Whatsoever little respite they may have, which those words imply, "Art thou come to torment us before our time?" it doth yet signify, that any thought of God was dreadful to them, as importing that state of torment that was approaching, was drawing on, wherein it will be let forth on them, wherein wrath will come upon them (as it must upon unreconciled men) to the uttermost. But,

5. How wonderful is the grace of God towards poor sinful men, that their case doth admit, and may admit, of their owning and believing the one God's existence, with another sort of impression than the case of the devils doth admit of. For that is plainly implied here, and therefore I make this inference and collection,—that it is expected that men should be otherwise impressed by this belief of the one God's existence than the devils may or can. It is expected the faith of this should make other kind of work in the heart of a man that entertains this belief, than it can do in the heart of a devil. And that very intimation signifies peculiar favour and special good-will; special, if compared with them, though it be yet more special, if you compare men with one another. Such good-will is the import of those words, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men." "He took not on him the nature of angels," or (as those words may admit to be read) "he took not hold of angels to save them; but took on him the seed of Abraham." His design herein spoke itself, (as in that Heb. ii. 14.) "Inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself did partake of the same." Saith he, "Those that I came to save, are such as have flesh and blood in them, not devils." And because they had flesh and blood in them, he likewise took flesh and blood that he might save such; that is, that he might die, that he might have somewhat mortal about him, somewhat that could die, that was capable of dying, and that dying he might overcome "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

6. We may learn hence, that there is not too great a stress to be laid upon the mere business of orthodoxy, or a rectitude of notions and sentiments, though about the greatest and most important things, things never so great: and you may suppose none greater than this, the existence of the one God, the certain existence of the unity of the Godhead. But yet, I say, a rectitude of notions or sentiments, even about so great things, or that which we generally call orthodoxy, ought not to have too great a stress laid upon them. I doubt not but that there is entire orthodoxy in hell, there is very little error in hell, very little of untrue notions, the truth of things is very clearly apprehended there, even the most terrible things; false doctrine doth not obtain there about such matters as this, to be sure; and therefore, let no man value himself too much upon this, that he understands aright, that he thinks right thoughts, doth believe that there is one God, one, and but one. He may do no more in this than the devils do, they may be as orthodox as he; and he may therein know no more truth than they know. But we may yet further infer,

7. That it is a very dismal thing, and ought accordingly to be deplored much, that such things as we have revealed to us, concerning God, should be from time to time propounded and explained, and inculcated, and yet have no more effect upon us than upon devils. How many a man is there, that lives under the Gospel of Christ, unreconciled to God all his days! Oh, if there be any such a one in this assembly, how often hast thou been striven with to turn and live! how often invited back to God in Christ! But it hath signified as little to preach to thee all this while, as if one had preached to a devil. Oh, wretched creature, that thou wilt make thyself a devil, when God doth not make thee such! that thou wilt sort with the devils, when God would deal with thee on very distinct terms from them! He would have thee come to him; he doth not invite devils back; he saith to thee, "Return, return;" he saith not so to them. Here is the blood of a Redeemer spilt for thee, it was not for them. And if we consider this matter generally; oh, how dismal it is to think, that the revelation of the doctrine of the very one God's existence, should have made no more impression than it hath, to advantage the world of mankind; that the state of things should be so very much upon earth as it is in hell! as if there were no difference in the cases of men and devils; that there should be such enmity against God amongst men upon earth, such rage, such contempt, such blasphemy against this one existing Deity. And indeed, in this, men are worse than the devils, for the devils do hate God, but they do not despise him; here on earth he is hated and despised too; the devils hate him, but they cannot contemn him; men hate and contemn him both together. "Wherefore do the wicked contemn God?" Psal. x. 13. But lastly,

8. We further learn hence, what this doctrine is likely to effect, if ever it come generally and to purpose to be believed in the world, even this faith of the one God's existence. What a blessed change will that infer and make generally among men; when the one God shall be represented, and understood, and known with effect generally! if ever there shall be such a time. That is, there shall be a world of reasonable creatures, all centring in this one, all conspiring in the adoration and love of this one God; all bowing to him and kneeling before him: and no contention amongst men but who shall express most of love and duty to their universal, sovereign Maker and Lord. And therefore, men are only miserable in the mean time by not having real truth impressed and inwrought into the temper of their spirits; they are only by this miserable, that they are fallen from the one God, and apprehend him not, apprehend not the unity of the Godhead in whom they all are to unite. If men were all united in God, in the fear of him, in the love of him, in subjectedness and devotedness to him, this could not but infer universal order, peace, and felicity, all the world over. Men are only miserable, only unhappy, by holding the truth in unrighteousness, and such truth; for the apostle speaks of such. This is the true ground, on which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them," Rom. i. 17, 18. But I shall not insist further upon this.

The next thing that comes in course to be handled, will be the doctrine of the Trinity. Having opened the Unity of the Godhead, a Trinity therein also will next come under our consideration.

LECTURE XIII.*

1 John v. 7.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

I INTEND no long discourse upon this subject, nor longer than may consist with the design of going over the several heads of religion, in as plain a manner, and in as short a way, as I can. It would very ill agree with such a design,

* Preached March 27th, 1691.

to insist upon and discourse upon all the several texts of Scripture arguments and objections this way and that, which are wont to be ventilated upon this point. All that can be expected, according to the course I have proposed to use, will be barely to represent that which I take, and which (I hope) we generally agree, to be the truth in this matter, in as few and as plain words as is possible. If one should take the large course, which some (it may be) would expect, it would be to make one particular subject the business of a long life's time, and would be to turn this place into a theatre of contentious disputations rather than serious instructions, tending only to gratify vain minds, rather than to edify the sober mind.

I shall not need to stay at all upon the particular controversy about this text, the authenticity of it, which, it is true, is disputed; but upon that account only, that some copies have been found not to have it. But for such as are in doubt thereupon concerning it, I need do no more than recommend them (amongst others) to what hath been most judiciously, and, indeed, very charitably, written as to that matter by Dr. Hammond, in his annotations on the New Testament; where he hath, with equal judgment and charity, represented how it is very easily supposable that in the transcribing of some copy or another, two verses coming here together, this seventh and eighth that do begin and end, both of them, somewhat alike, the eye of the transcriber might fall upon the latter, and so write without looking back to the former. A very obvious supposition, and a great deal more probable, (as it is a great deal more charitable,) than to suppose that either side, in the time of the Arian controversy, did design a corruption of the scripture text: I say, it is a great deal more rational, (as it is more charitable,) because indeed it had been a very foolish thing, merely out of favour to one side, to have corrupted the Scripture in that one particular place, leaving other Scriptures to stand as they were that speak so fully the same thing; as that Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. and that John x. 30. "I and my Father are one." It is not likely there should be a designed corruption, where the loss of reputation would be so very great, and the gain and advantage so very little; but we have reason enough to be satisfied that the most ancient copies have it as we here find.

And for the way of managing the discourse upon this subject, I shall not offer at that which some have done, the demonstrating a trinity in the Godhead in a rational way, as that which some have supposed sufficiently evident by rational light; and which some have made it their business to evince, (both Poiret and others before him,) and with no contemptible endeavour. But whether such do demonstrate their point, yea or no, it is to me a very strong demonstration of the strange imbecility of the human mind, that some should think it rationally demonstrable that that cannot but be, which others take to be rationally demonstrable cannot be. This, I say, it is a great demonstration to me of; and I do believe that they who do read the other writings of Poiret and others, who think the trinity rationally demonstrable, and read the writings of Socinus and others, his followers, who think the contrary, will apprehend, in other matters, Poiret to be as rational a man as ever Socinus was, or any that followed him. Compare the writings of the one and the other, in other matters; and then I say, it is a strong demonstration, and that which doth require our very serious thoughts, of the imbecility of the minds of men, and how little the confident pretences to rational demonstrations, by interested persons, engaged and dipped in a party this way and that, are to be relied upon, when some very highly rational men shall undertake to demonstrate, that it is impossible this should be; when others as rational as they, shall undertake to demonstrate it is impossible not to be. That is, that there could have been no such thing as creation, nor indeed any action in the Deity, and consequently, no Deity at all if there were not a trinity in it. That is, if there were not an eternal Mind which, when there was nothing else, should like an intellectual sun turn its beams inward upon itself, and so by consequence, beget an eternal action, its own eternal image, and that there must be an eternal love between that mind begetting, and the mind begotten: and there you have the trinity in the Deity.

But this I insist not on; only that it may appear that it is not impossible: and I hope that all pretence that it is, will in due time and easily vanish. It is so plainly revealed in Scripture, that there is a trinity in the Godhead, that we may very well take it upon the word of him that reports it to us, and who best (we may be sure) understands his own nature. Take it, I say, amongst those things of God, which are only to be known by the Spirit of God; as there are things of a man, that are only known by the spirit of a man that is in him; (as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. ii. 14.) and if the mind and spirit of every particular man have its own particularities known only to itself, till the man is pleased to reveal and make them known, sure it is very little strange that the Divine Being should have his peculiarities too, not otherwise knowable than as he is pleased to reveal them. And if he plainly reveal to us, that there is a trinity in the unity of his nature, then surely, to sober inquirers and learners, the business is done.

As to the latter part of the verse, I shall not need to insist upon it, "these three are one," having, I hope, sufficiently evinced to you the unity of the Godhead from another text. And I chose to do it from another text rather, that had that expression in it which this hath not. For this doth not expressly say, these three are one God, but it doth say, these three are one. But having already proved to you that the Godhead is but one, it leads us with so much the more clearness (having asserted the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead to be true) to apprehend, that it must be the truth of this place, and so shall have occasion but to repeat concerning that which we have already proved, but not to prove it any more. And therefore, the plain contents of this scripture you may take thus—that there is a trinity in the Deity, or, if you will, a little more largely—that there are three which we cannot more fitly express or conceive of, than by the name of persons, in the only one Godhead. And,

I. I shall evince the *truth* of this doctrine.

And now to let you see that this is reasonably given you, as the sense and meaning of this place, I shall proceed by some gradual steps: and,

1. To prepare my way, let you see that this is spoken here in this place; it is the doctrine of this place. So that if it can be made appear to be in itself true, we shall have all the reason in the world to conclude, that it is fitly represented as the doctrine held forth in this text. And for the truth of the thing, we shall come to consider from other places afterwards. And,

(1.) It seems very reasonable, inasmuch as we otherwise ascertained that there is but one God, that the one thing wherein the three persons mentioned are said to be united, is the Godhead. "These three are one." One what? It is most reasonable to understand the meaning is, that they are one God, though this be not expressed in the text. For it is very plain, from what hath been already said, that the Godhead can be but one. And when it is said, there are three in heaven that are all one, that one thing which they are said to be must needs be God, or the Godhead wherein they are said to unite; especially the Father being said to be one of the three, concerning whose Godhead there is no doubt.

(2.) It is very plain, (upon supposition that the three mentioned in the text do unite, or are united in the Godhead,) the meaning must be, that they are one God and no more; that is, that the one God which they are said to be, is but one, is one God and no more. There can be no reason imagined why it should be said they are one, if the intendment were not that they were only one; or that the thing which they are said to be, is but one. To say the Godhead is one, it must always mean one exclusively, that is, that there is no other God but that, that one. And so, that is the thing that these three do unite, or are united in: not one witness, it is not a being united in their end: that cannot be meant here: for it is manifest that the apostle doth vary the form of expression in the following verse, where it is said, "These three agree in one;" all to one purpose, all to one design, all giving one and the same testimony concerning Christ, concerning that Jesus who was descended and come down into this world. But here it is said in the text, they are one, are one thing, not one person; and therefore, it doth signify that they do agree, or do unite and meet in that wherein it is never intended to

say or intimate that they differ: that is, in essence they are united, but not in personality. If it had been a person that was spoken of, then it would have been proper enough to have spoken of it under the notion of things. But inasmuch as it is the essence, and not the person, that is here intended, therefore it is said, one thing: if we would read the words literally, it is, "these three are one thing," that is the meaning of them, and so they should be rendered.

(3.) Hereupon it is very rational to conclude, that when it is said, there are three that are united in this one thing, that it must also be understood, they are three and no more, as by one is meant only one, so by three is meant only three. Whereupon,

(4.) It must with equal reason be concluded, that these three which are three, and no more, must needs be some eminent three, and of some very eminent order. And do but pause here a little, and see if light do not spring into your minds about this matter: when it is said there are three (it being by parity of reason to be understood, three and no more) in heaven, Pray what three in heaven can there be, that are three, and no more, of one eminent order, but they must be three divine persons? Bethink yourselves of it a little: it cannot be three angels, for then it cannot be said, there are three and no more in heaven: and you have not heard of any higher creatures than angels, any superior order of creatures above angels, of which there are three and no more: and it cannot be three Gods, because the Godhead is but one; there is but one God and no more. Then I beseech you, What is there left? It is not three angels, it is not three of any sort of creatures superior to angels, of whom there are three and no more. And the Father is here mentioned as one of them, of whose Godhead there can be no doubt: and then pray consider, What can these three be? Not three creatures, not three Gods; therefore, they can be nothing but three persons, three substances in the Godhead. Thus then you are gradually led on to see, that this is the plain doctrine of the text; and if you can be convinced that there is in it, *veritas rei, the truth of the thing*, there will be no doubt at all but that it is *veritas loci, the truth of this place*.

2. And that is it I now come to, that is, to evince to you *veritatem rei, the truth of the thing*, that there is a trinity in the Godhead, that there are three that are all of them this one God. And, I shall (with all possible brevity) labour to prove it to you positively, from other scriptures and scripture-considerations, and then—show you the unreasonableness of what is pretended against it, how irrational the pretence is against such a thing. That is, that there should be three who in some one respect are truly to be said and called three, and in some other respect are as truly to be called, or said to be, but one. But,

(1.) I come to the positive proof. And because, concerning the personality and deity of the Father there is no question, there is none that will contend with us about that matter, therefore our business will relate to the other two. And concerning them, that is, the Word (as he is here called) and the Holy Ghost, I shall endeavour to evince to you these two things—that they are persons, and—that they are divine persons.

[1.] That they are persons. And here (as I have told you) we have not a fitter notion under which to conceive of them, nor a fitter word in our tongue by which to express or speak of them. Not that we can think, that person being afterwards to be clothed with the notion of divine, can be the same thing with God as with us; because it is impossible any thing can have one common notion to him and to us. That would be altogether inconsistent with the perfection, the universal perfection of the divine Being, to suppose that any notion could be common to him and the creature. For then, he should not comprehend all entity in himself, if there were a notion common to him and to us; for that must import something superior to both, and that were comprehensive of both, and so it would make God but a part of being. Therefore, the word person, as any other word whatsoever, that is wont to be applied to and spoken of God and of us, must be spoken of us but analogically, not univocally, not as if it signified the same thing when it is spoken of him and when it is spoken of us. And therefore, we are not to judge of a divine person by a human person, or by a created person. The difference is infinite, and the distance is infinite, between God and any creature. So any thing that is spoken of him must infinitely differ from whatsoever may be spoken of us under the same name. Therefore, when we speak of a person, among creatures, as signifying an intelligent *suppositum, being*, neither *suppositum* nor intelligent can be the same with him and with us. His intellect and ours differ infinitely: and it is so little known how individuations are made among creatures, that it is infinitely more impossible how they are made with God. But that being premised, that these two, the Word and the Holy Ghost, are so spoken of in Scripture, as that we have no other way of conceiving otherwise than that they must be spoken of as persons; this I shall endeavour to evince.

First, As concerning the Word, I only premise that which is in itself evident, that by the Word here, and the Son of God elsewhere, must be meant the same thing. As is plain in the first of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word:" that which is called the Word there, is called the Son of God presently after, in the same chapter: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." The Word and the Son are all one. Then, what is there and elsewhere called the Word sometimes, and sometimes Son, or the Son of God, that must needs mean what we can conceive of no otherwise than under the notion of a person. That is, we find the action from time to time ascribed to this Word, or this Son, of an intelligent agent, of one that did act understandingly and with design. And we can have no better signification of a person, no clearer notion of one, than that is. He is constantly spoken of as an intelligent agent; and concerning that, there can be no difficulty, nor indeed is there any controversy between us and our antagonists, concerning his personality; only they will have him to be but a human person, which we shall in its own place consider by and by. And,

Secondly, Concerning the Holy Ghost, that he also is a person, or such a one as we can conceive of under no other notion than that of a person; that is, as acting intelligently and with design: even so is he most apparently spoken of from time to time in Scripture. Hereupon it is said, He bears witness in heaven; as he did in heaven, and from thence, testify concerning Christ, that he was the Son of God, to be heard, and obeyed, and submitted to as such; and as a dove, descended in visible glory upon him from the heavens. This speaks the act of an intelligent, designing cause on his part, as to what he did in testifying, and so he is very frequently spoken of, as coming for such and such a purpose. "When he is come he shall convince the world," John xvi. 7, 8. And (which is most observable) in several parts of these chapters, of the 14th, 15th, and 16th of that Gospel, even there, where he had been spoken of under the name of the Spirit before, when one would expect, in correspondence to that name Spirit, it would have been said, *it*; it being neutral, a word of the neuter gender, it is said *he*; when *he* is come, not when *it* is come, he shall convince the world of sin: yea, and even the very laws of grammar and syntax are waived, as if it were on purpose to hold out this one thing to us, that the Holy Ghost was a person, an intelligent Being, working and acting with design: for when we have the word Spirit, presently *he* doth follow upon it; and at a very great distance, in one place, (several verses being interposed,) from any other antecedent but spirit. Indeed, in the 14th and 15th chapters, there was the Comforter as well as the Spirit, to which *he* might have reference; but still, Spirit was the nearer antecedent. But you will find, in the 16th chapter, the 13th and 14th verses, that there is no antecedent for many verses together, besides Spirit, and afterwards immediately subjoined *he*, and not *it*, on purpose to signify (and we cannot imagine what it should be to signify besides) the personality of the Holy Ghost. And it is a very unreasonable supposal, that in the form of baptism which we have, Matt. xxviii. 19. "Go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" that the two first should be persons, (as they are confessed on all hands to be,) and that there should be put in the same order with them a quality, as our antagonists would teach us to conceive, concerning the Holy Ghost;

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and what? of a quality, in the third place. That is, that when the design manifestly was there to state the object of all practical religion, of the whole of our Christianity, into the believing whereof we are to be baptized, there should be a transient quality put into conjunction with those two great persons, the Father and the Son. Surely, it needs but to stay and to pause here a little, to have light irresistibly strike into the mind of any one that will do so, that will consider how unreasonable it is to imagine, when the design is manifestly to represent and state the entire object of whole Christianity, that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that the two first of these are persons, and the third but a quality. Therefore, that being very plain,

[2.] The second thing that needs to be evinced is, that they are Divine persons, and much is done towards that already. It appearing they are persons, they cannot be created persons, they cannot be angels, of which it can be said there are three and no more. But we hear of no intervening order of creatures, above angels and below God. And then what should they be, since they are persons, (as is plain,) but Divine persons, that do subsist in the Godhead? And to evince this a little more distinctly, but very briefly,

First, Concerning the Word, or the Son, (which you see are both of them names of the same person,) how expressly is he often said to be God! In that mentioned first of John, nothing can be spoken more openly nor in plainer words. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And Psal. xlv. 6. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," which the author to the Hebrews (chap. i. 8.) allegeth to be plainly said to the Son; "And to the Son, he said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." So Rom. ix. 5. "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." And that, 1 John v. 20. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life:" most fitly spoken of the Son, who was to be the spring of life to us, according to what had been said a little above in the same chapter, "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

It is, I know, alleged with a great deal of triumph by some of the adversaries, that he is excluded in another place from being the true God, and that that should not be said of him, when we are told, (John xvii. 3.) "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." If the Father only be true God, then the Son is not. But the inconsequence of this will easily appear to them that shall but consider, how the word *only* is placed. It is placed so as to assert the predicate, and not the subject in the latter proposition. It is not said, Thou only art the true God, and so that doth not exclude the Son at all. The Father is the only true God, and the Son is the only true God, and the Holy Ghost is the only true God. But it cannot be said that either the Father only is the true God, or the Son only is the true God, or the Holy Ghost only is the true God; but they are each of them that God which is the only true one, and of which there is but one and no more. Do but observe that the word *only* affects not the subject spoken of, but the thing affirmed, or spoken of that subject. The case is but like this, as if I should use these words, "This is the only London." It may be true for ought we know, that there is no London, but this which is famously called so by that name; but if one should say, "This only is London," that is, this place where we are, and there the *only* should limit the subject, that were false; for there are thousands of places in London as well as this; there are a great many assemblies in London, a great many places of worship and societies besides this: but we may say, "This is the only London;" so the difference is plain to any that will consider it.

I might insist much more largely (but it is not needful to say every thing that might be said in a plain case) concerning the Son, to prove his divine personality by most manifest attributes of Deity, given him over and over in Scripture, as "The first and the last:" creating power, as "Him by whom the world was made, and by whom he made the world," which is over and over said of him. Col. i. 15. Heb. i. 3. John i. beginning. And universal knowledge, omnisciency, heart knowledge; "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." But then,

Secondly, Concerning the divine person of the Holy Ghost, that he also is God; that doth sure carry convictive light with it to any that do consider, that when the form of baptism is given (as was said) with design to state the whole object of our religion, "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" are mentioned together; and there can be no object of religion but God, none but a divine person, and we find the Holy Ghost frequently mentioned, upon the same account, as one of those eminent three. How many places are there (it were endless to name them) where these three are brought in together, as it were purposely to signify that they were *ejusdem ordinis, of the same order;* and that we are to conceive of each of them under the same notion, that is, that of Deity, of the Godhead in God. Look but to that 1 Pet. i. 2. Rom. i. 4, 5. 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. and a great many places besides, where these three are brought in still together. As if it were purposely to signify of their being of one order, and as having, in distinct respects, a concern in our great affairs; those that relate to our salvation and blessedness. Besides, that it must be a great prevarication, to understand that place otherwise than as the expressing the Holy Ghost to be God; Acts v. 3, 4. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?—thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God." And certainly if he were not God, it were the most dangerous thing in all the world, to have him represented to us as if he were; and so tempt men to pay the homage of divine worship to a creature. It is never to be imagined, that there would have been such a snare laid before us, to lead us into so dangerous a mistake as that; things would have been spoken more cautiously, if he had not been God, than, when it was just said before, "Why dost thou lie against the Holy Ghost?" so immediately to say, "Thou didst not lie to man but unto God." It is not to be thought, (the thing being so full of danger,) to place the notion or homage of the Deity upon any thing to which it doth not belong, that there should have been such incautiousness used, or so little caution, as directly to lead and train persons into so perilous a mistake. But besides all this, to put the matter out of all doubt; whereas, they that will have the Holy Ghost not to be God, being urged, "What is he then?" do say, "He is the mighty power of God, a certain mighty *vis emissa*, a divine *power* that *issues from* God for the working of such effects." As for this conceit, pray do but consider the matter thus: Is the Holy Ghost indeed not God, but the power of God? Why this power which it is said to be, is either a created power, or an uncreated one. If it be an uncreated power, he is God, for every thing that is uncreated is God; if he be then a created power, the created power of God, or the power of God, but created, then it seems God did, without power, create this power, and was without power till he had created it; so that he did the act of creation (which is an act of omnipotency) when he was impotent. It supposes, first, an impotent God, and then supposeth him, when he was impotent, to create his own power; that is, when he was without all power, he did that act which requires an infiniteness of power, to wit, to create. I know nothing that carries clearer evidence with it, than this doth, that the Holy Ghost cannot be that created power which these persons pretend to: it cannot be divine power distinct from God, from the very essence of God. Every thing of God is God, and cannot be otherwise. If he were the power of God and not God, he must have been created power, by God; that is to say, God did create omnipotent power, being before impotent: for this it plainly comes to.

Thus far, I think, it is with some competent clearness evident, that these three, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, (concerning the first, as you have heard, there is no question,) are persons; they are that which we cannot conceive of otherwise than under the notion of persons; and they are divine persons, so that there are three divine persons that do subsist in the Godhead, that is but one.

So you have this, as the doctrinal truth of this place, and as the real truth in itself, positively evidenced to you.

What is to be said by way of objection against it, we shall next come to. Only upon the whole matter, it seems to me, that there needs a great deal more of humility, and reverence, and seriousness, and fear of the Lord, overawing the spirits of men, to apprehend this to be the plain doctrine of Scripture, than of further argument in the case. And that will more appear by considering how irrational the pretence is, that this is a thing rationally impossible, that there should be such three, that are but one God. Nothing indeed would be plainer than that the same cannot be three and one, in one and the same respect; but, that they may be three in one respect, and but one in another respect, we may make appear to be no impossible thing, and that there is nothing of harshness in it, nay, whereof we have parallel instances, (as far as there can be a parity between God and creatures,) that occur to us every day. So that one would wonder how men can stumble in so plain a way, and when there is nothing indeed in view that should occasion it, besides their having indulged themselves, I fear, too much liberty to prevaricate in their own minds and reasonings before, and then they think it reasonable to justify error by erring always, by never retracting, or by endeavouring to make men believe, that things suggested to them as true, are impossible to be true.

LECTURE XIV.*

3. BUT now to come to the third part of the proposed work to vindicate the truth of this doctrine laid down, in the proposition, as to what is objected and alleged against it, which summarily and generally is but this one thing, into which all results; That it is contrary to the common reason of men, and such as doth in itself imply a contradiction, that three should be but one. And thereupon it is determined by the leader of them, Socinus himself, that if any thing do appear to be never so plainly contained in Scripture, if yet also it do appear to imply a contradiction, or to be contrary to natural reason, any, whatsoever violence, ought rather to be put upon the Scriptures than to admit it. And this goes therefore, with the men of that way, for a principle, that whatsoever seems to be repugnant to their reason, or to imply a contradiction, ought to be rejected, though never so plainly expressed in Scripture, or contained therein.

Now, first, I shall say here somewhat to this principle in the general, by which these men do steer themselves in this, and all matters of religion besides. And then, secondly, I shall say somewhat in the particular application of it in this case, and show how very untruly it is alleged here, that this is a doctrine repugnant to the common reason of man, and which doth carry a contradiction in itself.

(1.) As to the principle in general, I shall in short say these things to it.

[1.] That if we can be certain, that any thing is repugnant to the reason of man, as it is such and doth in itself imply a contradiction, it ought to be rejected even in duty to God, and as a piece of homage to him. We do owe that homage to our Maker, as the God of truth, to reject every thing that we are sure is contrary to the common reason of man, which he hath put into him, which is truly and purely reason, and which belongs to the Spirit, unto which by the inspiration of the Almighty God that understanding is given, which distinguishes him from the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field. We do owe it as a homage to the Author of our nature, to reject whatsoever is manifestly contrary to that reason, and which is in itself a contradiction. First, because he is most confessedly the *primum verum, the first truth*. And as all the beams of the sun, in whatsoever way they do shine to us, whether directly, or by never so various refraction, we are sure are all from the sun; so whatsoever rational dictate, that we are most certain, or can be sure is such, which we find arrive to us, we cannot but be sure that it is from the Father of lights, from whom can issue nothing but light; nothing opposite to light or truth. And secondly, that it is impossible we can in duty, or as a homage to God, believe a contradiction, any thing that carries a contradiction in itself, because the highest and primary reason upon which I am to admit any thing for truth, is as it is a production of the first truth, as hath been told you. But I am certain, the same thing cannot be true and false; and therefore, as a deference to God, I cannot have greater reason to believe it, than I have to disbelieve it. If it carry a contradiction in it, and is pretended to be from God, I cannot believe it for any reason, but for the same reason I am bound to disbelieve it. There is not more weight in one end of the scale than there is in the other; and so it cannot be believed in that case, as a piece of duty unto God: and thereupon, we are as ready to reject every thing we are sure is contradictory and repugnant to a manifest dictate of reason, as they can be. But,

[2.] If any thing be plainly contained and expressed in the word of God, that seems repugnant to our reason, we are then certain that the seemingness and semblance is false, because we cannot be surer of any thing than that God is true, and that he can never be deceived himself, nor deceive us; that both verity and veracity are most essential to him; and that it is repugnant to his nature, either to be ignorant of any thing, or to lie unto us in any thing. And therefore,

[3.] When there is this competition between any plain words of Scripture and a seeming dictate of reason, we are to censure the latter by the former, and not the former by the latter; we are to measure the rational dictate by the divine word, and not the divine word by the seeming rational dictate. And especially,

[4.] When that thing is spoken often in Scripture, in the divine word, and in varied forms of speech, which have all the same manifest sense and meaning, and are not, without the most notorious violence, capable of another. And (which will be the ground of this last-mentioned assertion) when,

[5.] That word being professedly and declaredly given us as a rate to measure our sentiments as well as our practices by. If therefore, we should oppose that which seems to us a rational dictate, to the plain expressions of that word, we make that which is to be ruled, the rule; we do in that case regulate our rule, and do not admit that the rule should regulate us. We judge the law, (as the apostle James's expression is, in a case that hath reference to practice, and the case is the same in reference to sentiments, and our judgments of things,) which is certainly very great insolency: that when God, in compassion to the darkness and blindness of our minds, gives us such a rule, a light shining in a dark place, unto which we are told we should do well to take heed, we should reject this rule, and say, we can do better without it, reject this light, and say, we can see better without it. As if one should, out of mere good will, offer himself as a guide to a bewildered traveller that knows nothing of his way, and this traveller should at all turns be controverting with his guide, and say, I know the way and how to steer my course better than you; which would be as well the highest insolency as ingratitude, supposing that guide to be very highly superior, and very kindly condescending to do that office in such a case. And again,

[6.] There is yet the more ground for this, when there is among men, and even among wise, and learned, and rational men, a very great division about what is a rational dictate in this case, and what is not. This makes the determination which I have given to be so much the more reasonable, and makes the pretence on the other hand so much the more absurd, that that should be given for a dictate of common reason wherein most rational men do disagree, at least, therein, as rational men as these pretenders, are of a quite contrary mind: and that cannot be so clear a dictate of common reason, wherein even the most rational men do disagree, and sure then, in that case, one would be glad to be determined by a divine word. And I add,

[7.] That the reason of man, in this our present state, even in things of much inferior concernment, is very dubious and uncertain, in matters wherein religion is not con-

* Preached April 10th, 1690.

cerned, and so wherein the minds of men are not apt to be perverted by ill inclination, as in the matters of religion they are. For though it be very true, that it is natural for men to be of some religion, yet it is as true and as evident, that there is an aversion and antipathy in the minds and spirits of men against true religion, against sincere, living religion. And if the reason of man be a very dubious uncertain thing, even when there is nothing to bias one this way or that, as it is in thousands of instances that might be given most apparently; much more cause have we in matters of religion, and of this nature, not to over-attribute unto it. In philosophical matters, wherein men's minds cannot, through prejudice, be swayed this way or that, and wherein it is no one's interest that this side be true rather than that side, yet there are the greatest difficulties imaginable in determining what is reason and what not, what is true and what not, as all the controversies in philosophy do show: and some, wherein it is the hardest matter imaginable, even to the greatest wits that have ever been in the world, to free themselves from the appearance of contradiction, which side soever they had in the controversy. As it is most notorious, to any that know any thing in philosophy, about the *compositum continuum*, whether the *continuum*, that is, a body, doth consist of parts always divisible, or of indivisible parts; so that bring it to the minutest thing imaginable, even if it be to the breadth of a hair, whether it be still perpetually divisible or indivisible. It is plain, take one side or the other in that question, and hitherto all the wits in the world have not found how, freely and clearly, to disentangle themselves from contradiction in saying this is always divisible, or it is sometimes impossible to be divided any further; and the apprehension of that doth (I must acknowledge) greatly lower my reverence to that which goes under the notion of a rational dictate, when in such a case as that of any, the minutest thing you can imagine, even the breadth of a hair, no man shall be able to assert either it is always divisible or sometime indivisible, without entangling himself in such appearances of contradiction, as from which the greatest wits that have ever been have not been able to show us the way of being extricated. And when there is such a division, even among the masters of reason, the highest pretenders to it; this is a rational dictate, saith the one side, the quite contrary is a rational dictate, saith the other side, even in this very business of the Trinity itself; whilst some with loud clamour cry out against it as impossible to be, others, on the other hand, take upon them to demonstrate it to be utterly impossible that it should not be; that there could be no creation, no Creator, if there were not a Trinity.

These things being said in reference to that principle in the general, I now come,

(2.) To the application of it to this objection; that is, that this is a doctrine, (say some,) to common and rational principles, contradictious in itself, that three should be one.

That we may speak to this with the more clearness, we shall—consider what it is, from Scripture, we assert concerning this matter, and then—show how unreasonably this is pretended to be repugnant to reason, or to imply any thing of a contradiction.

[1.] What it is we do from Scripture assert in this matter, and what we do not. For we must distinguish here, between plain Scripture doctrine and the bold determinations of some schoolmen. We do not think we are obliged to justify every determination of a confident and presuming schoolman, as if it were divine writ. But what from Scripture we do affirm is, That there are three in the God-head, that these three are some way distinguished from one another, otherwise they could not be three, there were no pretence to call them three. We find they have distinct names; that is plain—the Father, the Word or Son, and the Spirit or the Holy Ghost, over and over. But there must be somewhat of distinction among themselves, otherwise there were no pretence to call them three, if they were no way distinguishable.

Again, we do affirm they are so far distinguished from one another as, that can be said concerning one which cannot be said concerning the other. As when we say, "The Word was made flesh," (which you know the Scripture speaks,) the meaning is, not that the Father was made flesh, or the Spirit was made flesh, but that the Son was made flesh. When it is said, (as it often is,) that the Spirit or the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father, or the Son, the meaning is, not that the Father sends himself, or that the Son sends himself. Therefore, they are so far distinct from one another as, that is said of the one which cannot be said of the other. But then, how much greater the distinction is, we pretend not to say, because the Scripture doth not say it. Only this we do say, We can think of no notion by which they are so fitly distinguishable as that of personality, as that of their being distinct persons; that we do find plainly said concerning one of them, the Father, (who is so called in that Heb. i. 3.) that the Son is the express image of his person. So we render the word *hypostasis* fitly and aptly enough. And they being so frequently mentioned together, as we find they are, it doth naturally suggest to us, that there should be a suppositality. And concerning the personality of the Son too, there is no question; but as concerning the Holy Ghost, he being so frequently spoken of under the notion He, and (as was noted to you) the gender varied on purpose, contrary to strict grammar, we ought also to conceive of him under the notion of a person: though at the same time (we have told you) it is impossible that the notion of a person should be the same with God and amongst men, and that for the reason which hath been mentioned to you. Only, we have nothing by which more fitly to conceive it, than by this notion. Then, so much as this being what we do affirm and assert to be the doctrine of the Scriptures, and to be Scripture in this case, then, I say,

[2.] This is very unreasonable and pretenceless, to affirm that this is contradictious in itself, or any way opposite or contrary to the plain dictates of reason. For where should the contradiction lie? It is only pretended to lie in this, that the same thing cannot be three and one. And it is easily admitted, that the same thing cannot be three and one, in the same respect wherein they are but one. But nothing hinders, but that the same may be, in different respects, that is, in those respects wherein they are three, they are not only one: in that respect wherein they are but one, they cannot be three. But, that in divers respects; the same thing may be three and one, or that there may be a trinity, a triad, in one and the same thing, the instances are so many, so plain, and so notorious in other inferior things, that it is absurd and unreasonable to pretend this to be contradictious, or contrary to the dictate of nature. Let us go to the most obvious thing that can be thought of. If I should go no further but only to give you an instance of this book which I have here in my hand, it hath its breadth, its length, and its thickness, as you all easily see and apprehend; but its breadth is not its length, nor is its length its thickness, neither of these are one another, yet all the same book: that is, this thing which is so long, so broad, and so thick, is this book. If we speak of a man, he is a very vegetative creature, and he is a sensitive creature, and he is a rational and intelligent creature, and yet, it is most plain, vegetation is not sensation, nor sensation intellection. The sun, it hath belonging to it light, and heat, and motion: that luminous body is the sun, that calefective body is the sun, and that moving body is the sun. These three are all but one sun; and yet there are three in it, as is evident. The world is full of instances of the like nature. We can hardly think of any sort of things wherein this may not be exemplified. And whereas, the greatest quarrel is about personality, there is nothing more plain than that one and the same man may sustain three persons, the person of a father, the person of a son, and the person of a magistrate, and the like. Many persons may be sustained by one and the same man; the notion of person, in the strict and common sense, being only taken for the circumstances of their state and condition who are spoken of, and not as denoting this or that particular essence; and so to be a man, and this or that person, is not all one: and so to be God, and this or that person in the Godhead, is not all one. The same man may endure, and may *sustentare*, may put on, and may bear, several persons: and so it is no repugnancy to reason at all that the same God do so too. And therefore, this pretence of the irrationality or contradictiousness of this doctrine, doth itself want a pretence; there can be really no ground for

it. And so much hath been so far said, by some of the late zealous contenders in this case the other way, that they are brought to say and publish, that truly he must be a madman that will say there cannot be three persons in the same God. That we find published not long ago: so far doth that pretence vanish, that this doctrine must be rejected as being irrational and contradictory. And if we would take the notion of person and personality, in the most strict and scholastic sense, it would be with very great arrogance that they must pretend this doctrine (taken even in that sense) to be contrary to a common, rational dictate, when as it is so very well known first, that the very notion of individuation or personality, suppositality, or more generally personality, in reference to rational beings, is one of the most disputed things in the world. And how absurd is it to say, that this or that is opposite to a common rational dictate, about which (as was said before) the most learned men, and the highest pretenders to reason, have constantly disagreed. There must first, before this can be said, some one common notion of personality, and individuation be fixed, which all men must assent to, as soon as ever they hear it, that must command assent to it in every man's mind. But about these things there is the greatest disagreement, and hath constantly been, ever since the name of a schoolman or metaphysician hath been known in the world. And then, secondly, besides that, there is so great a disagreement among schoolmen and metaphysicians, about the notions of suppositality, personality, and individuality, that they who will conclude this to be against a rational dictate, must be able to evince, that the notion of personality must be the same with us and with God, which it will be impossible for them ever to evince, and the contrary whereof (as hath been said) is demonstrable. That is, were it ever so certain that there cannot be three finite persons partaking the same finite nature, it will be hence no consequence, that there cannot be three infinite persons partaking the same infinite nature, or communicating in the same infinite nature: no reason, for a parallel cannot be drawn so much as with a plausible pretence, between what is finite and what is infinite, in this case.

But to shut up all that I intend, as to the polemical part of this discourse, I shall only leave these few things, which will plainly represent to us that this doctrine may be conceived, and hath not that difficulty in it which commonly hath been thought. As,

First, It is out of all question that God is but one, can be but one. And,

Secondly, That whatsoever is necessarily, is God. Whatsoever is in being, from a necessity in nature, is God; than which no principle can be plainer. And,

Thirdly, That whatsoever is by dependence on the Divine will, is creature; whatsoever is not of necessity, but by mere dependence on the Divine will, that is all creature. "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Fourthly, If, therefore, we do suppose the Son and the Holy Ghost to be from the Father, by a necessity of nature, an eternal necessity of nature, and not by dependence upon his will, they will not be creatures, because nothing is creature but what depends upon the will and pleasure of the Creator. And if they be not creatures, what are they then? Then they must be God, and yet both of them from the Father too: for all that do assert the Trinity, do acknowledge the Father to be *fons trinitatis, the fountain of the Trinity*: and if from this fountain, the Son be one way, and the Holy Ghost be another way, both from the Father: that is, the Son from the Father immediately, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, and this, not by choice, but by an eternal necessity of nature, here is this doctrine as easily conceivable as any that I know of whatsoever, that lies not within the compass of our manifest demonstration. And my business is not now to demonstrate to you that thus it is, but that it is very easily conceivable that thus it may be. That is, that the Son and the Holy Ghost may be from the Father, and that we are sure they are from him by an eternal necessity of nature, and not by choice. It is not by his pleasure they are and were, but by eternal necessity of nature they are from him as he is originally from himself. That is, they are always and eternally in that nature which is self-originate. And here is no contradiction, nor the least appearance or shadow of it, in all this.

And thus far now hath our labour been taken up as to this subject, about the truth of it; that is, to prove and to vindicate it. Our next business, which only remains, will be about the importance of it, the great usefulness of it, and the mighty weight and stress that lie upon it. At present I leave this with you, that I know nothing more needful to clear our apprehensions, and make our minds very calm and serene, in deference to this doctrine of the Trinity, than, first, high, adoring thoughts of God, and secondly, mean thoughts of ourselves. If we can but think highly enough of God, and meanly enough of ourselves, and how unmeet and incompetent such moles and worms of the earth as we are, must needs be to make an estimate of his nature, and how things are with him, otherwise than he is pleased graciously and freely to declare to us concerning himself, there will be nothing then in all this doctrine that we shall stumble at, nothing that we shall receive with difficulty, and nothing but what we may receive with great use and advantage to ourselves.

LECTURE XV.*

THEREFORE now for the *importance* and *use* of this doctrine, much may be conceived of that, if it be considered how the stamp and impression of a Trinity doth run through the world. A noted writer, of our time, hath said very much to that purpose, of which I shall say but little. Take the whole universe of created beings and you have every where a Trinity instamped. It is observable enough in that great triad, the several things conceivable under each member, of nature, morality, and religion. But it is with religion that we are concerned, and wherein the practice of it doth principally appear, and is most considerable. Our religion you do know, objectively considered, is made up of doctrines to be believed, and of duties to be done, and of benefits to be sought, and these are comprised in those three noted summaries, the creed, the decalogue, and the Lord's prayer. In these three, there is some impression and resemblance of the trinity in the divine nature. That is, of that power, and of that wisdom and knowledge, and of that benignity and love, which are the three great most noted principles we have to conceive of, and that we cannot but distinctively conceive of, we cannot otherwise conceive of, than as distinct in the simple union of the Godhead; and which may probably enough correspond to, and be the very notion of, Father, Son, and Spirit.

Why now, if we consider doctrinals in the first place, the doctrines that do make up the first and most noble part of the scheme of religion, you know how they all depend upon, and are reduced to, the notions that are given us of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; upon these three heads hangs the frame of Christian doctrine. That is, of the Father considered as God Creator; and of the Son considered as God Redeemer; and of the Holy Ghost considered as God Sanctifier. Which three great works of God, though it be true that they do each of them owe themselves to the concurrence of each of the persons according to that known maxim, *opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*;[a] which is undoubtedly a true and clear one; yet each of these is appropriated to each of the persons severally, not exclusively, but eminently. And that we may understand that aright, when it is said, the Father creates, it is to be understood eminently, not exclusively, of the Son and the Holy Ghost: and so as to the rest. When we profess to believe in God as the creator of heaven and earth, that is, in God the Father, as he is the first Fountain of all being, uncreated and created too; why though that be plainly said, yet it is as plainly said, that without the Word was nothing made; and that by him, that is, the Word, even he—who is said to be "the bright-

* Preached April 17th, 1691.

a The Holy Trinity, in external operations, is not divided.

ness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person," the worlds were made: and that they were made by the Spirit of his mouth; and that the Spirit did move upon the waters, that is, upon the fluctuating chaos, which we must suppose to have been first made, before things were made out of it: and that it was first made is the most demonstrable thing in all the world; otherwise, it were, itself, a necessary and self-original being, and so God; the notion of God would not be all-comprehending, or there would be something *præter Deum, besides God*, originally and naturally, and of itself. So again, as to the work of redemption, that was designed by the Father, but wrought by the Son, and applied by the Holy Ghost. These are plain things and abundantly evident in Scripture, as, if I should turn from text to text, you would see. But I must suppose you to understand it already. You cannot then but see the mighty importance of this doctrine of the trinity in our religion. We shall have occasion to press that further by and by. But now hereupon, I shall, for putting a period to the discourse on this subject, subjoin several instructions in reference hereto. As,

1. That we should all learn to adore the wonderful Divine condescension, that he should so far unveil himself, and make known so much of the things of his own nature and being, to such despicable beings as we. We can never wonder enough at this. Indeed, I have many times considered, it is a very instructive thing, that so many of the pagans should discover so very reverential thoughts of God, upon this account, and under this notion, as they apprehend his Being to be inscrutable, unsearchable, as that inscription on one of their temples doth import, "I am he that was, and he that is, and he that shall be, and no one hath ever unfolded my veil." Such reverential apprehensions had they (however they came by them) of the inscrutableness and occultness of the Divine Being, that there were such arcana, such secrets veiled from all eyes, that could never possibly be looked into. Now that God should take such poor creatures as any of us are, and let us see so far into the veil, that whereof we could have had no certain apprehensions if he had not told us, how wonderful is it! Though some have made it very much their business, (after they had got the hint from Scripture concerning the trinity,) to show how rational it was; not only to show how consistent it was with reason, (which is a very justifiable undertaking and a great piece of right done to our religion,) some carry the matter higher, (as I told you,) and undertake to demonstrate it to be necessary, and that we cannot conceive of the nature of God, and of that great work of his, the creation of the world, in reference to one another, otherwise. But this is to strain beyond what the exigency of the case doth require. It may however, (by that improvement I have already made of it too,) serve somewhat to rebuke the proud confidence of that sort of men, who represent this doctrine as contrary to a common, rational dictate, the common sense and reason of mankind. That is most insolently pretended when, as (unless they will assume to themselves that there can be no such thing as a rational dictate, that is not stamped at their mint) I say, unless they would assume that to themselves, it must appear very incongruous to pretend that such a thing is impossible to be, when others at the same time, (who may for ought I know lay as good a claim to that of being the men, and that wisdom shall die with them, as they can,) should say with so much confidence, it is impossible not to be; and that there could be no such thing as a Creator and a creation, if it were not so.

But waving this disquisition, since it is most certainly not impossible in itself, it is very adorable that God should come, and so graciously discover to us that so it is; when we see how useful it is, and how expedite a frame of religion it lays open before us: that he should discourse to such children, such weaklings, as we, at that rate concerning his own nature; "I will tell you how things are with me: now in the Godhead these are co-existent from all eternity, Father, Son, and Spirit: and this I would not have hid from you; I would have you to be possessed with right notions and apprehensions of my nature thus far, that thus it is with me, and in me." You would wonder that a great and wise prince should take upon him to discourse his arcana with a peasant, a mean, ignorant peasant. But we do not enough wonder at this condescension of God, upon this ground, that we do not enough set ourselves to consider the distance between God and creatures, and what mere nothings we are to him; and that when we have the most exalted thoughts that our minds are capable of, concerning any created being whatsoever, and then descending to the meanest sort of creatures we can think of, the distance is not only greater, but it is still infinitely greater, between the great God and us. What then have we left to do, but to fall down and wonder, fall down and adore, and cry out, "Whence is it to us that thou shouldest let us know so much of thyself?" that whereas, the things of God are never to be known distinctly, otherwise than as the Spirit of God doth reveal them, that Spirit of God should be the Author to us of such a revelation as this, which we have contained in the Bible, concerning this great and most important mystery.

2. Let us learn this too, not to think it a small matter, now that we are informed that there is in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit; that all three should so far concern themselves as we find they do, and be so constantly concerned as they are, about our affairs. If all the potentates on earth should concern themselves about the life of one single fly, it were not so strange a thing, it were not so great a stoop. We should consider with ourselves over and over, What am I? what am I, and what is my life, that the eternal Father, and the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit, should all concern themselves from eternity about me? And again,

3. It should further instruct us into this, to fasten the apprehension deep in our souls, of the great concernment of the doctrine, that it may lie with weight upon us, as a seal that doth not make impression unless it be pressed on; that we should endeavour and intend more to press on this doctrine, this truth, upon our own souls, that it may make the proper, due impression, that we may be delivered up into the mould and form of it: as the expression is, Rom. vi. 17. And to that purpose, let us bethink ourselves, how miserably (where this doctrine is not entertained) the scheme of Christianity, and the Christian religion, are scattered and torn by the want or by the denial of it. This apprehension should urge us so as that the doctrine should lie with greater weight and pressure upon our spirits, because where it is not received, away go the great limbs of the Christian religion. The Deity of the Son of God, that is abandoned and cashiered: well, and what then becomes of our religion? Do you not think yourselves concerned in this matter? What! Are you willing to venture your souls otherwise than in the hands of a Divine Saviour, when you know yourselves to be sinners, to be guilty creatures? Do you think it will answer the exigency of your case, to have an atonement made for you of no greater value than if one mere man were made a sacrifice for another? And if that would do, suppose one man were as good as another; why inasmuch as all are sinners, when he goes to satisfy another's sin, who shall satisfy for his sin? Or how shall he satisfy for his own? And suppose an innocent man should be made on purpose (as it is supposed in this present case) to be a sacrifice; that is still but man for man. It is true, he hath no sin of his own to satisfy for, but suppose he could satisfy for the sin of another man, there must then be as many innocent men created as there are guilty men, at that rate. But would not you be loath to hazard your souls upon such conceits as these? and to quit your hold of a mighty God for your Saviour? of this assurance, that he who is to be your Saviour is known by the name of "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace?" Would you be content to abandon this, that he is to be your Saviour who is God blessed for ever; who before the worlds were made was with God; and in time was made flesh, and dwelt among us; that Word that was with God, and that was God, and by which all things were made, without which nothing was made that was made, was made flesh? An amazing thing it is to me, how men that pretend to believe the divine authority of the Bible, can disentangle themselves from such a place as this, "The Word was made flesh." They that will have Jesus Christ never to have been, no such person ever to have been, before he was born of the Virgin Mary, I would then know of them, "What was that that was made flesh?" It was the Word

that was made flesh; there was somewhat before this flesh was made, or it was nothing that was made flesh. And every one that understands the ordinary use of this expression, (flesh,) knows it doth not signify the person of a man, but the whole of a man, not the body only: for when it is said, "in his sight there shall no flesh be justified," what is the meaning of that? That the bodies of men shall not be justified? Surely not. But thus, from not believing this doctrine, proceeds the denial of that great and noble propitiation, once for all made for the sins of men, under the proper notion of a propitiation or an expiatory sacrifice to atone for sin, and take away guilt. Again hereupon,

The eternal priesthood of the Son of God is evacuated and reduced to a nullity; and all upon this, that an alterity cannot be conceived in the Godhead. Not that there is therein, *aliud et aliud, one diverse from another*, but that there is there *personæ altera et altera, one person distinct from another*. But because this is not apprehended, nor will be apprehended, therefore, say they, There can be no such thing as a propitiatory sacrifice, such as we, such as the Scripture, such as the Gospel, doth most expressly speak of, that is, of him who was God offered up unto God. For, say they, there is but one person in the Godhead; and a satisfier and a satisfied must be two persons, there must be in such a case an alterity of persons, *personæ altera et altera*, and so they truly reason. He that doth satisfy and he that is satisfied must be two persons: this is most certain, but they, not admitting the alterity of persons, therefore exclude the whole doctrine. And then,

That mighty power that is to go forth from the Divine Spirit, for the breaking of the bands of iron, and the rescuing of captive souls out of the devil's power; to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, all that is reduced to nothing too. And so there is no other Christianity left in the world but a certain sort of self-sprung religion; no power but that which I can be the author of to myself, what I have of mine own: or else if they will have more, they do speak altogether unintelligibly and contrary to the plain sense of things: that is, they will not have the Holy Ghost to be a distinct person in the Godhead, but (as they call it) the power of God, meaning a quality. But I take what hath been said against that, to be truly as plain demonstration as can be used in any case whatsoever. The Holy Ghost is called the divine power. Comply with them so far, then say I, This divine power is either created power or uncreated. If this divine power be created, then they must suppose God, while he was without power, to create power; that is, that God being first impotent, created power and became omnipotent. But if they will say, It is an uncreated power, then they say what we say: then it is God: the Holy Ghost is God. But he is God so as he is capable of being sent, and sent of the Father, and so that he must be a distinct person in the Godhead. But the stress of all that mighty affair which is to be wrought in the souls of men, when they are sanctified; of children of the devil, and friends of hell, to be made children of God, and meet to be partakers of an inheritance with them that are sanctified, with the saints in light: all that mighty work that is to be done by an Almighty Spirit, must be proportionally diminished as the cause is diminished, as the agent is diminished and reduced, by their doctrine, to a mere creature. Therefore, I say, labour to apprehend deeply the mighty importance of this doctrine, and to fix the apprehensions of it, and to have it wrought in your souls, that so such a truth may no more be capable of being torn away from thence than one faculty of your souls can be torn from another. And,

4. Labour to savour and relish such truth, this truth, this doctrine, labour to get the savour and relish of it into your souls; that is, to receive this truth in the love of it. It is a matter of dangerous importance, when truth of this kind, which concerns the vitals of religion, is received merely as an airy notion, and is not digested, doth not enter and sink deep into our hearts; and that which must entertain and admit there, even into the very centre of our souls, must be the love of it. "They received not the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved," 2 Thess. ii. 10. And what became of that matter? When they did so lightly adhere to divine truth as one doth to a thing that he doth not love, or that is not united to his soul by love, they easily suffered their souls to be cheated of it: and then, for their not loving this truth, (it being a thing most highly criminal not to love divine truth, not to love so great and sacred a thing,) God gave them up to strong delusions, to believe lies, that they all might be damned who received not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Such truth they could take no pleasure in, but they could take pleasure in unrighteousness. "Let them go," saith God, "the way that the inclinations of their own wicked hearts carry them to." There is that kindred, that alliance between the soul and truth, that there is a violence done to both if they be severed, and if the soul do not inwardly love truth, as that which is most nearly allied to it. They that are after the Spirit do savour the things of the Spirit, as they that are after the flesh do savour the things of the flesh. And this is the way to become most stable Christians, when souls and truth come to be united and knit together in love, meeting in one and the same common centre, and even in this as the centre; as you may see in that place which I will recommend to your present perusal, and future serious thoughts. Colos. ii. 2. Saith the apostle, "I would, that ye knew what great conflict I have had for you, (as he introduceth it to them by what he saith in the foregoing verse,) that your hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God." And what is comprehended in this mystery of God, that is, of the Father and of Christ? it is generally expressed first, "the mystery of God," and then particularly, "of the Father and of Christ." The former *and* is not copulative but exegetical; "To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and," that is, even, or to wit, "of the Father and of Christ." That is, the mystery of God doth comprehend these two. The Holy Ghost is not always mentioned, being expressly enough so in many other texts. But here is the very sum of our religion in this mystery, "the mystery of God," to wit, "of the Father and of Christ;" two particular expressions including the general one, from both which, (as other scriptures sufficiently instruct us,) the Holy Ghost issues forth, as the great and mighty Agent to accomplish all the great things, which by Christian religion are to be effected in the world. And this was the apostle's deep concern on the behalf of these Christians. "You cannot imagine," saith he, "what conflict I have about these things; that you might be strong Christians;" and how? "That you may be knit together in love, unto the riches of the full assurance of understanding," all loving together, all agreeing together to love the same truths, the same doctrines, and thereby to have it incorporated, inwrought into you, that you may be able to say, "I can as soon suffer limb to be torn from limb, as suffer such truth as this to be torn away from my soul:" that that is to be bought and never to be sold, never to be parted with on any terms, "What! part with that? or be indifferent towards that? or let my mind hover or be in suspense? why it is my very life, my life lies here; shall I in the midst of a tempestuous sea, being safely brought to a firm and stable rock, quit my rock and go to floating again amidst the raging waves?" So will any man reckon in this matter, that hath any care or concern for his soul. Again,

5. You may hence learn, how we are to eye God in our transacting the great business of covenanting with him; that is, as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; which that initial seal of the covenant doth plainly enough dictate, when we are required to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. When I enter into covenant with God to take him for my God, if I am first solemnly to do it yet; or if I am with solemnity, from time to time, to renew my covenant, we must consider how we are to do it; we must not think of taking God abstractly or taking one person alone; but we must take God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost for our God. Do not think your baptism signifies nothing, when it is directed to be administered in that order, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. So you are to consider with yourselves, "I am to be a devoted one, I am a devoted one, and must continue so, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." A wonderful thing, that we should be a congregation of

such persons dwelling on earth, who have these names named upon us, that such a claim should be laid from heaven to us, I claim every one of you for mine, for mine, saith the Father, you were baptized in my name; and so the rest. Why should we not walk up and down this world with this sense on our minds, with this thought often renewed, often impressed upon us?

LECTURE XVI.*

6. IT lets us see how we are to understand the relation that results from such a covenant between God and us, whereby we become related to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and they become related to us; you have heard under what distinct notions, principally, but not exclusively, each of the persons is related to us. The Father as Creator, not excluding the Son and Spirit; the Son as Redeemer, not excluding the Father and Spirit; the Spirit as Sanctifier, not excluding the Father and Son. We have shown you concerning each of these, that creative power (according as the Scripture teacheth us to conceive) is from the Father, as the Fountain; through the Son as the way of its conveyance; (in respect whereof some speak of a natural mediatorship belonging unto the Son of God before the ordinate one) and by the agency of the Holy Ghost, who is represented as the immediate Agent in all the operations of God towards the creature, whether in the sphere of nature or of grace. And we are to look upon the Son as under the notion of the Redeemer, but so as to understand that this redemption was designed by the Father, and is applied by the Holy Ghost; and upon the Holy Ghost as the Sanctifier, and yet still to understand that this his sanctifying work was predetermined by the Father, procured by the Son, and effected by himself. When therefore we are to consider God as related to us as our God, ("this God is our God, he will be our guide even unto death,") we must take in and bring together each of these notions and conceptions concerning him; we must take in the conceptions of each of the persons, "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost is my God." Somewhat agreeable to what the ancient philosopher saith, concerning relatives, *Relata sunt quorum totum esse est ad aliud;* that is, *relatives are such things, the whole of which appertains to another.* Why so? All that is conceivable in the Divine Being is, in this case, all to us. The fulness of God is to be considered with relation to us so far as is needful, so far as we are capable; he doth not reserve himself from us in any thing of it. How admirable a thing is this! How great and high thoughts ought we to have concerning the privilege state of our case! Indeed, there is nothing that we have to consider of this God, or to look after the knowledge of, to answer the curiosity of a vain mind; but every thing or any thing that may answer the necessity of a perishing soul, of a soul that must otherwise be miserable and lost. Whatsoever is requisite to our real felicity and blessedness, we may look to all that is in God as determined by a special relation unto us. "As I am such (saith God) I am such entirely yours, all for you, wholly yours." Therefore did the everlasting covenant that comprehends and conveys all this, yield such solace to the soul of dying David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "Thou hast made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire." 'I care for nothing beyond this.' The great thing that the covenant doth convey, is God; and by it it is, that God the Father, Son, and Spirit, do become related to us as ours, if once we do take hold of the covenant, if once we put in our claim, and do but lay the ground by that act of our own interest: our claimable interest doth depend upon that; that very act of taking, accepting, "laying hold," as the expression is in that Isa. lvi. for the encouragement of poor strangers that might possibly apprehend they were quite cut off from God. "No, let the sons of the strangers that take hold of my covenant encourage themselves; that makes me theirs: I am theirs, if they do but lay hold; it is but take and have:" as afterwards, in this chapter where the text is, it is said concerning the Son especially, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." And he hath him who hath once taken him. Again,

7. This serves specially to instruct us concerning our application to God in prayer. That is, that we must still comprehend in our thoughts, Father, Son, and Spirit together; the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, as it is expressed in the text. I know and have particularly understood from some, that they have been full of dubious, perplexing thoughts, how to steer aright in their applications to God, making their solemn addresses so as to run into neither of those things which they have pretended to have been, both of them, their fear and confusion, on the one hand, by not ascribing distinctly to each of the persons what they should; or blasphemy on the other hand, by ascribing what was not due, what was not to be ascribed. But our way is very plain, if we do but consider what the Scriptures say concerning these three substances in the Godhead, and what copies it sets us of applying ourselves hereupon. That is, to the eternal Father, through the eternal Son, by the eternal Spirit: so we ought to apply ourselves, and here is nothing to lead us into confusion or indistinction of thoughts in so doing. It is plain we have the Father always represented as the original Foundation of all light, all life, all being, all excellency, all perfection, whether created or uncreated. He is then a most adequate terminative Object of our worship in such application and supplication. We go properly to the Fountain of all good. Whither should we go else? But he is (especially to those that have been in delinquency and transgression) inaccessible; we need a mediator; there could no mediator answer the exigency of our case, that was not God as well as man: we need a Divine Mediator, a God Mediator, we cannot expect that God should do any thing for us but for the sake of God, or for his sake who was God; so we are always taught to apply ourselves, to direct our addresses: and so we are to expect the answers of them; that is, that prayer must ascend through Christ, and that blessings are to descend through him. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," through him, Eph. i. 3. And we are to suppose that whatever is done for us, in answer to our prayers, when they are accepted, it must be by the agency of the Holy Ghost. The state of our case is such, as to require an infinite almighty Agent to work in us, and to work for us, the things that are necessary to our present support, and to our final blessedness. And we are hereupon taught by our Lord himself, in respect to the final and terminative Object of such worship, (that of prayer for instance,) to pray unto the Father; "Our Father which art in heaven"—so we are taught to pray. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," Ephes. iii. 14. Yea, and so our Lord Jesus Christ did pray himself; "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter," John xiv. 16. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34. And to him he renders solemn acknowledgment by way of thanksgiving. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," Matt. xi. 25. And when he did so, (as we find his was a very praying life, in the days of his flesh, here in this world,) it is very vainly and foolishly alleged that then he must, according to our doctrine and notion, be supposed to pray to himself; it is a very vain and idle pretence. And so I find indeed, that the arguments of that sort of adversary, that is, they that do impugn the divinity of the Son of God, tend to prove, generally, nothing but that which we never deny, that is, that Christ was man. This is the thing that by many arguments they set themselves most industriously to prove, which none of us deny, that Christ was man. Who doth doubt it? But they would thence conclude that because he is man, therefore he could not be God; which is their absurd and foolish consequence, when we know it was so plainly, so very plainly said, that the Word which, in that text, is said to be with God, is also said to be God; and the same Word is said to be made flesh, to be incarnate, to have assumed and taken on flesh; that is, not as if it did, in becoming flesh, cease to be what it was before, but did only add an assumed nature to a divine;

* Preached April 24th, 1691.

nd therefore, there being two natures now meeting together in that one person, it was no way unintelligible, but hat he should do that in the one nature which was impossible he should do in or by the other. That is, as man he id grow, and as man he did die, and as man he did ray, when as God he could do none of these. But he hat was God did do these things, though not as he was Iod. He that was God, did lay down his life, as in that rd chapter of this epistle, v. 16. "Hereby perceive we he love of God, that he" (that same he that was God) laid down his life for us." And so he that was God hed his blood for us, Acts xx. 28. "Feed the flock of Iod (his church) which he hath purchased with his own lood;" his own, who was God; though, as God, we now he could neither bleed nor have blood. But whereas, he Son of God, as he was the Son of God and God, did ray, and praying, apply himself to the Father, so are we o do, to pray, and in praying, apply ourselves to the Father as we are led by that great example. But then, we eing nothing but creatures, we have the whole Deity in iew as the Object of our worship and addresses. But ot the Deity, abstractly considered, but the Deity as subisting in these three persons. The Deity abstractly conidered, in the case of our Lord himself, was neither the Object, nor the subject of prayer; God, as God, did neither pray nor was prayed unto by him; did not pray, for t was the man, the man Christ that prayed; nor abstractly, or merely as God, was he the Object of prayer; but as he Godhead did subsist in the person of the Father, so id the man Christ apply himself to him, and so could in o sort be said to pray to himself, in praying to him. But ow, I say, we who are nothing but creatures, we have the ntire Godhead, not abstractly, but as subsisting in three ersons, to apply ourselves unto, and those persons conceived of according to the order they are represented to tand towards one another, and to be related one to another. As we told you already, when we pray to the Father, as he final and terminative Object of our prayers, we are at he same time to conceive the Son as through whom the prayer is to be transmitted, together with the answer, the good we are to expect and pray for; and the Holy Ghost, s by whose power to pray, and by whose power the answer of prayer is to be effected too. And so it is God that our prayers must respect, God to whom, God through whom, and God by whom. Pray to God, through God and from God, and so our prayer hath every way to do with God. Our prayer, as it is to be through the mediation of Christ, so both it and its answer are to be wrought by the Holy Ghost; we are in that great and sacred work of praying, to deliver up ourselves to the conduct of the Holy Ghost, and so we are to do in the whole of our course. "As many as are the sons of God they are led," *ractled* (as that word signifies, Rom. viii. 14.) "by the Spirit of God." Which Spirit is a Spirit of adoption, (as t afterwards follows,) the Spirit that belongs to the state of worship, as they are sons, that teaches them to cry, "Abba Father." And because they are sons, he hath sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, as it is said in hat parallel place, Gal. iv. 6. And we are required to pray alway in the Spirit, Ephes. vi. 18. And in the Holy Ghost; 20th verse of the epistle to Jude. "Praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Put all this together and then every prayer of ours ought o respect each person in the Godhead. That is, it ought o be to God, through God, and from God: even as the answer, it is to be in the same order, originally God's answer, through Christ, and by the Holy Ghost. And so we run into no confusion, when we suffer ourselves to be governed by Scripture light. And we can be in no danger of incurring the guilt of blasphemy; for we do not ascribe o any of these persons more than the Scripture doth plainly each us to ascribe. And as our Saviour saith concerning himself, so may we concerning each of these persons: when the Scripture saith so and so, and doth attribute such and such things to them, will any one say, that he blasphemes that saith, that the eternal Father is God, or the eternal Son is God, or the eternal Spirit is God? Scripture most expressly saying these things as words can speak them. And again,

8. This should further teach us how to steer our whole course in this world: our business here on earth, ought to be (in the main of it) religion; we ought to make religion our business. The business of religion, while we are in this imperfect state, is only a motion God-ward. The religion of the way, is coming to God. So that any one who is sincerely religious and godly, will be able to make answer to this question, What is the main business of your life? This true answer he can make, "My main business is to make towards God; I am aiming at God, tending towards God, as one that hath been removed and set at a distance from him, and so am to be brought back to him." It was this Christ died for, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Now this being the state of our case, we are distant from him, in nearness to whom consists our duty and felicity. When we are to take and direct our course God-ward, we must have a final term for our motion: "Whither are you going?" "Why, my course is tending and directed God-ward." This motion must have for its ultimate term, God the Father. This is the sense and language of an inquiring soul, when once it comes to understand what the Scripture doth so plainly reveal; that there are in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Their sense, I say, is what we find expressed, John xiv. 8. "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us:" "do but show us the Father, and we have enough: our great inquiry is after the Father, the Fountain and Original of all things, in whom is our life and our only hope." "Well," saith our Saviour, (meeting that genius and sense of such an inquirer,) "I know where you would be, and who you are seeking: and have you so long known me, and are ignorant of the Father? Come, I will be your Conductor, I will be your Guide, no man cometh to the Father but by me." And therefore, as there must be a final term of this motion, so there must be a way leading thereto. "Why, I am the way, the truth, and the life; (John xvi. 6.) no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." What is considerable in all motion, is especially considerable in this. In every motion there must be a final term, and there must be a way to move in. The Father, he is the final term—the Son, he tells us, he is the way. But then there must be a third thing, there must be an acting, moving principle besides, and that must be the Holy Ghost, and can be no other. It is by that one Spirit that all who shall approach to God must have access to him, even to him the Father, considered under the notion of the Father. Jews and Gentiles have been wont (as that was the noted distinction) to divide the world. Now we find both spoken of in the same context, Ephes. ii. His business was to make them nigh who were afar off. The Gentiles were afar off, the Jews were comparatively nigh: now Christ was to make them nigh too, and both of them were to have access by one and the same Spirit to the Father: from the 13th to the 18th verse. Whoever have a mind to return, to come back to God, (from whom, in the common apostacy, all have made a defection and cut themselves off,) here is the course and method of their procedure, they must propound to themselves God the Father, (the Fountain of all life and blessedness,) to whom they must come, to whom they must be bending and directing their course, and to whom they must guide their course in the way he hath prescribed, and that is, by his own Son: "No man cometh to the Father (saith our Saviour) but by me." And they must be acted on in this way towards that final term and end, by the power of the Holy Ghost. There can be no motion without the concurrence of such a third, unto which there is a correspondency here. That is, no man can move, but he moves somewhither towards some term, nor can he move, but it must be in some way. Nor again, can he move but it must be from some motive principle, that carries him through this way to that end. And so you may easily represent to yourselves the business of your lives here in this world. My business is from day to day, to tend towards the eternal Father, by the eternal Son, and under the conduct and influence of the eternal Spirit. These are obvious and useful instructions in reference to the doctrine that hath been opened to you from the text, that do more directly concern and relate to the subject we have thus far been upon.

But there is somewhat else, in reference to the present

purpose, upon this subject, which is collateral, and will be of use to us, however, to take notice of too. Our great design upon this text, was to observe to you, that there are such a three in the Godhead; three and no more, as we have observed and insisted, of one certain order, Father, Son, and Spirit, that do subsist in the Godhead, which is but one. But the apostle doth here not only take notice what they are, that are thus in heaven, but what also they do, how they are employed, amidst the glory of the heavenly state. And he tells us they "bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." You see who the witnesses are, in the words of the text, and may see, a little lower, what is the matter of their testimony, (as I was hinting to you but now,) that is, in sum, the truth of the Christian religion or the whole constitution of the Mediator. This is the record, (as it is presently subjoined,) that God hath given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. He hath an infinite fulness of life to convey, to communicate, and to diffuse through a desolate world, a world lost in death and darkness. And how is it to be conveyed? in what way is it to be communicated? Why it is all treasured up in his Son, he hath constituted and appointed a Mediator, that in him it might be deposited, and that by him and through him it might be transmitted and made to diffuse itself, and flow amongst lost and perishing souls. This was the matter of this testimony. Why let us take so much of instruction from hence,

That since those three glorious Three that are in heaven, are bearing record to the truth of our religion, of Christianity, that is, that God hath a design to communicate life to lost and perishing souls, and hath treasured up that life in order to this communication in his Son: since this is their record, their testimony, I pray let us take care that we duly receive it. Be afraid of slighting that testimony, the matter whereof is of so great importance to ourselves, and the Authors whereof, are the three glorious Persons in the Godhead, so venerable and so great Ones. When they are said to bear record in heaven, or to testify in heaven, the meaning is, not that their testimony is performed in heaven terminative, but originaliter, that is, these witnesses do testify from heaven, concerning this matter which is of so great importance to the sons of men on earth. And pray see that we receive their testimony, as after it follows: If the testimony of a man (who is of any credit) ought not to be slighted; the testimony of God is greater. We have the testimony of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, concerning this one thing, that there is a design of saving sinners, and giving life to them through his Son, and that this life is only in this way to be communicated and conveyed to perishing and undone souls: what an awe should this lay upon our souls that are perishing! And it is to us, that this salvation is offered. They are dead themselves, as the apostle's expression is, "You are dead, but your life is hid with Christ in God." This being the state of our case, tremble at the thought of slighting such a record, such a testimony, that proceeds from these three great Witnesses that do bear record in heaven. That is, the Father testifies concerning his Son, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased:" The Son, that eternal Word, testifying concerning the man to whom he united himself, replenishing that man with a divine glory, so as that glory descending from heaven, and accompanying him in his descent from heaven, shone visibly in him as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. For he, at the same time when, after his descent, he had united himself with flesh, is said to be the Son of Man, who came down from, and who is in heaven, John iii. 13. He was therefore testifying from heaven, and was actually in heaven, when also he was actually united with this man on earth. And the Holy Ghost, he testifying from heaven, by descending on this same man, in visible glory like a dove, and lighting upon him. Thus, here was God the Father, testifying from heaven, and the eternal Word testifying, and the ever blessed Spirit testifying, from heaven, and their testimony meeting all in one point, namely, that Christ the Mediator is he by whom life is to be conveyed from the God of all grace unto undone, perishing, lost souls.

And consider in reference to this further, that as this is a testimony to us, it is our concernment, and is incumbent on us, so to comport ourselves as that it may finally prove a testimony for us, and not a testimony against us. This testimony is directly to us, that is, that this is God's appointed way for saving lost souls, and bringing of them to life and blessedness; and consequently, according as the design of this testimony is comported with or not, it will be either for us or against us. For us, if it can be recorded at last concerning us, such and such have had the Gospel preached unto them, Christ hath been offered, God hath been offering himself in Christ; and they have obeyed the Gospel, they have complied with the call, they have received the Son of God. Oh! how great a thing would it be to have a record in heaven for that! How did Job solace himself in this, "My record is in heaven." When you can appeal to the records in heaven touching transactions between God and you, and you can say, "Lord, thou didst make an offer to me of thy Son, thou didst require me to receive him as my Lord and Saviour. I have done so, I appeal to thee whether it be not recorded above; let the records of heaven be searched, see whether I be not recorded a believer, one that hath resigned up my soul to God in Christ by the power of the eternal Spirit, to be entirely and absolutely his for ever. O! how blessed a thing will it be to have such a record in heaven concerning you and for you? He that knows all things knows that such a one hath received Christ in truth, such a one hath truly believed, such a one loves the Lord Jesus in sincerity."

And how fearful, by consequence, will it be to have it recorded in heaven against you, "So long, so many days, so many years hath such a one lived under the Gospel,—so often hath a Christ been tendered to him, and been refused by him, and there he stands in the records of heaven a refuser of the grace of God, refuser of his Christ, despiser of the great salvation, that hath been published and proclaimed, and "begun to be spoken by the Lord himself, and was confirmed by them that heard him, God bearing them witness by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

And besides, that we are thus to take notice of what is doing above, how these Three employ themselves, their bearing record in heaven, consider too (and therewith I shall shut up all) where it is that this work is doing, that these Three are bearing this record in heaven. Let us consider a little, and take this instruction from it, that it very ill becomes us to alienate ourselves from heaven, and disregard the affairs and concerns of heaven. For we find that our affairs and concernments who dwell on earth are minded in heaven. In heaven there is a concern about such poor wretched creatures as we upon earth. It is very unworthy dealing if we live here upon earth, grovelling in the dust of it, and very seldom think any thought of heaven. When in heaven, by that glorious Triad above, we see our concernments while we are upon earth are not forgotten, are not disregarded. These great and glorious Ones in heaven, are taken up about our affairs. Sure it should provoke us to look upwards much and often, adoringly. It should suggest from time to time this thought to us, that the intercourse between heaven and earth is not cut off. Still (as abject creatures as we are in this our low estate) these glorious persons above are concerned about us. Certainly, it should be often considered by us, that we have mighty attractives to draw our minds and thoughts upwards, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost still bearing a record from heaven to us about things that are of the greatest and highest concernments for us in mind.

And it should, in fine, provoke us to have aspirings upwards towards the blessedness and perfection of the heavenly state. In heaven, these three bear record, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. Who can think of this, and not say, "O that I were there! O that I were there? Then will this glorious mystery of the Trinity lie open to my view." It is in that seat of the Divine glory that these Three are performing this kind office towards the poor children of men, even amidst the light and glory of the heavenly state. The time will come that we may hope to ascend, and be caught up into this region of light, and in that light to see light, so that as whatsoever is dark, and obscure, and in-

nown, and unrevealed, concerning this glorious Three nd One, will be done away. When once we ascend and et up thither into the regions of light and bliss, where the lory of the Eternal Being doth display itself, we shall hen know as we are known: we cannot know now but n part, and see but in part, but we shall then know perectly and fully, and as we are known; so far as the capaity of created nature can admit. O! how pleasant should ur aspiring upward to these Three be, where they do thus estify and bear record. How often should we be directng our thoughts and spirits, and the longing of our souls, owards these regions of light and bliss, saying within ourelves, "When shall a period be put to the time of my onverse with bats and moles in this base earth? when hall I hear the Divine voice from the throne of glory that hall say to me, Ascend and come up hither, and see the hings whereof thou hast hitherto but heard by the hearing f the ear?

LECTURE XVII.*

Matt. v. 48.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

NEXT to the doctrine of the Trinity, comes (according o proper theological order) that of the Divine Attributes r Perfections, most fitly to be considered. After the disourse of the trinity which we have showed you subsists n the Godhead, we have chosen this text, both as it serves o confirm, and as it serves to regulate, that foregoing loctrine.

First, As it serves to confirm it. For when we are so lainly told that "there are three that bear record in heaven;" and that the great Object of our religion, and wherero we are most solemnly to be devoted, is represented to us s three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; supposng such a triad as you see in the Godhead, you can suppose it under no other notion than that of a very great and igh perfection belonging thereunto. And that, therefore, t must greatly intrench upon the perfection of the Godead, and unspeakably diminish it, if there should be any ttempt or offer made to diminish and detract from that acred number. It could not but be a horrid maim to the very Object of our religion; and against any such dispoition thereunto, or to do any thing, or to admit of any hought into our minds, that may have that tendency, it would fortify us greatly, to have the belief well fixed in ur minds of the perfection of the Godhead. And,

Secondly, it serves to regulate that doctrine of the trinity oo: that is, to direct us to understand it so as may conist with the other perfections of the Godhead; where we re sure it is impossible there can be any war, or that there hould not be the highest and most perfect agreement. We nust so conceive of the trinity in the Godhead, and the erfections that we are here and elsewhere taught to ascribe nto it, as that these may manifestly accord with one another. And for that purpose, we must conceive of the Dirine perfections as the Scripture doth direct us, according s God himself speaks of them; allowing his word to be ur measure, in making our estimate and judgment conerning them. They that take another course, and pretend o discover to us the incomprehensible nature of God, by nethods and measures of theirs secluding this, and opposing it in any kind, truly we have a great deal more eason to be astonished at their confidence than we have o admire their knowledge; as if they could make a better liscovery and a clearer representation of God to us than e himself. But if we do understand the Divine perfecions according to those plain and express measures which e hath given us in his word, or which he enables us to ollect, as we are reasonable creatures, from what he hath aid in his word concerning himself and them, it would hen withhold us from any such exorbitant conceptions concerning the trinity of persons in the Godhead, as shall not be easily reconcileable with the doctrine of his perfections, according as he hath represented and stated it himself.

And upon that account, shall we apply ourselves to consider so much concerning the perfections of the Godhead, as this Scripture will give us a general ground for. Indeed to speak of the several perfections and attributes that do belong to the Divine nature, distinctly and at large, would be the work of a life's time; and very little agree with what I have designed, the expounding and opening to you the principles of religion, in as short a time as I can. Therefore, I have pitched upon this text, designing to sum up all under it, which I think requisite to say concerning the excellencies and perfections of the Divine Being, which we commonly speak of under the name, his attributes. You may take the ground of discourse thus,

That all the excellencies which are requisite to make up the most absolute perfection, belong as attributes to the nature of God; or as so many attributes to be ascribed to God. This some may possibly apprehend, will be but to do what hath been done already, and to do it over again. That is, when in proving to you the existence of the Deity, we showed that we are to conceive of him under the notion of a Being absolutely perfect. It is true, it was impossible to demonstrate his existence without forelaying that notion of God. And that is suitable to what the laws of method do require, in treating of any subject whatsoever. That is, if there be occasion to put the question *an sit*, whether such a thing be or not, and to prove the existence of it, first, and before we come to that inquiry, to inquire *quid sit*, and what it is. To open the nature of such a thing, there must be first some general notion assigned and laid down of that whose existence we would prove, and about which the first inquiry was made *an sit*, whether it be, yea or nay. Otherwise, in attempting to prove that, we may as well prove any thing else, if we do not give such a notion of it as will distinguish it from another thing.

But now after we have done so, it comes properly of course then to proceed to a more narrow inspection into the nature of such a thing. And so the order of tractation did require it should be in this present case. That is, when we were to inquire concerning the existence of the Deity, first to put you in mind, what you and all must be supposed to apprehend concerning the thing we inquired about, that is, a Being of absolute perfection in the general; and we can have no other notion of God but as a being absolutely perfect. That being done, and it having been evinced to you that there is such a Fountain-Being from whence whatsoever perfections we do behold, and come under our notice among the creatures, must have descended and been derived, inasmuch as whatsover we behold, and take notice of, that comes under any notion of perfection with us at all, is not nothing, and therefore could not come from nothing, and therefore must be first in a fountain from whence it came. When by this means, I say, we have plainly evinced, that there is one Being which hath all perfection originally in itself; and thereupon shown that Being to be a fit object for religion, and to be worshipped by us, and to whom duties and exercises of religion ought to be performed, and that this can be done acceptably no way but agreeable to his own will; thereupon we were put upon an inquiry, how that will of his might be understood and known; and having found that it was discovered (with that design and to that purpose that he might be duly and acceptably worshipped) in that word that bears his name, thence we come, regularly and of course, to speak of things particularly and more expressly concerning him, (whereof we have had some general notions before,) which are contained in this Book, and which this word will help us to a more distinct knowledge of. And therefore now, in speaking to the proposition laid down, we are to consider the subject of it, "your heavenly Father;" and then we are to consider the thing affirmed concerning this subject, He "is perfect."

1. For the former, the subject of this affirmation, we must consider in what sense (as there will be occasion to take notice of by and by) he can be spoken of under the name of a subject. Scholars know how to distinguish be-

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tween a subject of predication, and a subject of inhæsion. He can be no subject of inhæsion, as you will see presently. But a subject concerning which this or that may be affirmed or spoken, that is the only thing which we can truly and properly mean when we speak of God under that name or term. But whereas he is here mentioned as our "Father which is in heaven," (as our Saviour directs he should be prayed unto, in that comprehensive system of petitions that he himself was pleased to give his disciples, "Our Father which art in heaven,") we must distinguish between Christ's calling him Father himself and his teaching us to call him so, or his speaking of him as our Father. When Christ himself calls him "Our Father," he calls him so as he was; and so he doth speak himself, when he speaks of his having come from, his having descended from, the Father. He could mean by the term "Father," nothing else but the first person in the Trinity. But when he speaks of him as our Father, and directs us to speak of him, or to speak to him, we do not need so to limit that term "Father," in reference to us, for we may fitly enough consider the whole God in the paternal relation to ourselves. Concerning the Father there is no doubt, for so our Saviour hath taught us to conceive and speak, "I go to my Father and your Father, my God and your God," John xx. 17. And even the Son is spoken of as our "everlasting Father," Isaiah ix. 6. And all the children of God are said to be born of his Spirit, and to be begotten thereby, John iii. 1. And suppose we should look upon Father, here, strictly as a personal name or title, yet so we must consider the Divine nature as subsisting *fontaliter*, or as in a *fountain*, in that person: and it is that person as having that nature eminently and originally and firstly in him; even that same nature that is common to each of the persons. And so it is not in the person as the person, but as having the Divine nature in it, which is the subject here spoken of. "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The Godhead, or the nature of God, subsisting as in the Fountain, in the Father; and that same nature which is also common with him to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. But then,

II. For that which is affirmed or spoken of this subject, He "is perfect." How are we at a loss when we come to speak of this divine perfection! "I have seen an end" (saith the Psalmist) "of all perfection, but thy commandments are, or thy commandment is, exceedingly broad." Even so much of divine perfection as is expressed that one way, (in the divine word) is of so exceeding vast a latitude, as to represent itself as the matter of the highest wonder to a very enlarged and comprehensive mind, that had exceeded the bounds of all other perfection, and already gone beyond them all. I have seen an end of all perfection, but how vast a perfection beyond all that do I perceive in thy divine word, wherein there are yet but some sunbeams, some glimmerings of the perfection of the Divine nature! Indeed when we go about to speak of such a subject as this, or to think of it, we may even fear to meet with such a rebuke as that, Job xxxviii. 2. "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" Can we think by searching to find out God? Can we find out the Almighty unto perfection? Job xi. 7. Somewhat the case requires should be said, of what we can say and conceive but little of. Something the exigency of our case doth require; that we labour, all of us, to be informed concerning one with whom we have so much to do, and in whose hands all our great concerns do lie.

For the word that is used here, "*perfect*," and the words in the learned languages that we are referred to by these penmen, they do (as all words must do) fall most inconceivably short of the thing. Words cannot but be poor, and labour under a penury, when they are expressive of any thing of God. Alas! they can go but a little way in it.

The words that we have here to do with more immediately, do carry in them a kind of diminishing and lessening intimation of coming to a state, or having come to a state, that is higher and more excellent, from a state that was meaner and lower; in which the subject spoken of is (as it were) supposed to have been before, according to the general and indefinite use of such words. As the Greek word τελειος that is here used, refers to a word that signifies *an end*, and so carries an intimation with it, as one had but then attained an end which he was aiming at, and tending towards before, which implies such a diminution as can by no means be admitted concerning God. As when any one doth then suppose himself to have arrived at an eternal sort of perfection, when he hath compassed an end that he was about. "I work this day, and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfect;" finish a work I was engaged in, which is but an external sort of perfection. The word (for want of being more expressive) is borrowed and employed here, in a case of very transcendent height above that. And so for the Latin word *perfectis*, or *perfectus*, it carries an intimation with it as if the thing spoken of were, now at length, thoroughly made that which before it was not. Such expressions do (through the natural poverty of speech and language) lessen and diminish greatly the thing that should be represented and set forth by them.

But to consider the thing itself, (as we may be capable to open to you somewhat of the divine perfections,) there are two things to be done in reference hereto. We shall note to you some things more generally that do concern the Divine perfections indefinitely considered: and then shall (though briefly) come to consider some of the particular perfections themselves, which we are more specially concerned to take notice of, that are comprehended under those generals.

1. There are some things more generally to be laid down concerning the Divine perfections, or excellencies, or attributes; you may call them which of these you will, fitly enough. And,

(1.) There is this to be considered concerning them, that there are of these divine excellencies or perfections, which we are taught to attribute to God, some that are altogether incommunicable ones. There are some that are incommunicable; that is, that have not so much as a name common to him, and to us, by which they are to be signified and spoken of. As there is his self-subsistence, his all-sufficiency, his eternity, and his immensity. These are attributes or perfections of the Divine nature, that are not so much as common in name to him and to us; so appropriate to him, that there is nothing known by the same name that can be said of us. And there are some of his attributes and perfections that are communicable, that is, which under one and the same name, may be spoken of him and of us, of him and of the creature. As his wisdom: there is also such a thing among men: and his power: they have some power: and his goodness; they have some goodness: and so his justice, his holiness, and his truth: these are divine perfections that are spoken of under one and the same name, concerning him and concerning some of his creatures. That is one thing that you have in general to note; as concerning the incommunicable attributes of God, they have not so much as the same name with him and with us; for there is nothing in us, to which such names do agree: all-sufficiency, immensity, eternity, omnipotency, self-existence, and the like. But the other (as was said) are signified by words applicable to somewhat in us, as to be wise, to be good, to be just, to be powerful, and the like. And,

(2.) In the next place, you must note, that for those divine attributes and perfections which are communicable it is only the name that is common to that thing in him, and that thing in us, which is expressed thereby. It is true that there is the same name but not the same nature. There is a likeness, a similitude, but not an identity, or a sameness. Take heed of apprehending or imagining any such thing between the divine wisdom, or the divine power, or the divine goodness, that are uncreated, and that which is created; and so of his holiness, his justice, and the like. We are not to think there is a sameness of nature, though there be the same names used in such perfections as these, as they are found to be in God, and as they are found to be in us, or in the creature: for it is impossible that the nature which is infinite and the natures which are finite can be the same. An infinite nature and a finite nature must needs differ infinitely, and therefore can by no means be the same nature. Wherefore, all that is said in this case, in reference to us, when God is pleased to derive and communicate from himself unto those whom

ie regenerates, that which is called the divine nature; it s only said of it,—that it is his image, and his likeness, hat is conveyed or communicated: it is only somewhat ike God, or the image of God, that is impressed upon and rrought into the soul. We must take heed of thinking hat it is the same nature, as they have thought and blashemously spoken, who have talked of being godded in lod; as if the very nature of God was, under such a name s this, transmitted into the creature. And again,

(3.) We must understand these perfections or excelencies of the Divine nature, to be his very nature itself, nd not to be any accidental thing superadded thereunto. Ve must not conceive that such divine perfections as wisom, and power, and goodness, and the like, are additions the nature of God; but they are his very nature itself. 'here can be no such thing as an accidental supervention the Divine nature; but every thing that is in God must e conceived to be God. He is essential wisdom, and oodness, and truth, and is not these things by accident, s men may be, so as to have those things separable from ieir nature; no, nor can his nature, indeed, be so much s conceived without them. We are not to look upon iem as accidents, either as separable or inseparable from is nature, but as being essentially included in it. And iis is most evident, upon the account we have showed ou; and the thing speaks itself in demonstrating to you ie existence of the Godhead, that that Being whose extence we were to demonstrate, is self-existent, existing lways by and from itself, without depending, without eing beholden to any thing from whence it was. Now hat is so self-existent is existent necessarily; that is, it wes its own existence to that peculiar excellency of its wn nature, to which it is repugnant and impossible not exist. Now, whatsoever doth exist necessarily, so that s non-existence should be altogether impossible, (which the peculiar manner of the Divine existence,) that must eeds be unalterable. What is necessary, must be eterally or invariably necessary, and without any mutation: id nothing can be superadded to another but must infer mutation: any addition would make an alteration. 'herefore, none of these perfections are additions to God; r then they would make a change; but that which is ecessarily what it is, never admits of any change, neither addition nor subtraction any ways.

(4.) You must take this general note further, that it is ence consequential, that the excellencies and perfections the Divine nature are in him, in perfect simplicity. hat is, if none of them do differ from the Divine nature, en it is impossible they should differ from one another; ey cannot really differ one from another in themselves. is true, indeed, that by our imperfect way of conceiving ings, through the narrowness and incomprehensiveness our minds, which cannot take in all things at once, we e fain to admit distinct notions which are wont to be lled inadequate notions concerning the Deity. We can nceive of such and such excellencies but by parts, but little and little. It is but a small portion we can take of him in the whole, and but very little after all. And erefore, all we are fain (looking upon the glorious and er-blessed Deity) to conceive, is an unknown wisdom in m, and an unknown goodness, and an unknown holiss, and the like. Not as if these things did more really ffer in him than one and the same face (as one aptly presseth it) doth really differ in itself because a great any glasses are placed against it, that do themselves ffer from one another, and are variously figured and cut, seem to represent divers faces. There is, I say, no ore of real difference in these perfections from one anher, as they are in God, than there would be in that case so many real things that are reflected by so many glasses, here the difference of the reflected image doth proceed om the glasses, and not from the original, which is one d the same to them all. And that we may preserve the tion entire of the Divine simplicity, it is easy to be deonstrated to them that shall consider—that if there be t a most perfect simplicity in the Divine nature, so as at the several excellencies belonging thereto be really in m, one and the same thing, then these excellencies could t meet there but by composition; they would make a mposition in the Divine nature if they were there with real difference. But such a composition in the Divine nature is altogether impossible, upon thsee two accounts. First, If there were such a composition there must be supposed a causation: if the Divine nature were compounded, it would be inferred it were caused; and so God were not the first Cause of the first being: and, Secondly, (though one would think that nothing should need to be added after that, it being plain, nothing can be prior to God.) If there were a composition there would also be a limitation, and so these perfections of the Divine Being would not be infinite, and consequently they must be perfections altogether disagreeable, no way agreeing to the Divine nature. It cannot but be that he must be infinitely wise, infinitely good, infinitely powerful, and the like. But he should not be so, if these things did really differ in him from one another; for whatsoever doth really differ from one another, doth limit that other from which it differs. If there be an infiniteness in goodness, or an infiniteness in power, or an infiniteness in knowledge, we cannot suppose many infinites; there cannot be more infinites than one; and therefore it is but one and the same thing that is all these. Whatsoever you do design to the one, you must detract from the other. And if you should suppose two infinites, you do thereby suppose neither to be infinite, but both to be finite. That therefore you must fixedly retain, as a general rule, that the several excellencies and perfections of the Divine nature, are in him in most perfect simplicity, and so do not differ in him, as one thing differs from another. Only the Divine nature and being itself, as it hath all excellency and perfection in it, doth when it comes to cast an aspect upon us and upon our minds, appear as various, though in itself it is most simply one. And again,

(5.) You must further note this, that the negative attributes of the Divine Being do always imply somewhat positive. There are some things ascribed to God in negative terms, which must be understood to have a positive sense and meaning under those terms. As when it is said of God, he is immortal, which is a negative term, it implies the most infinite and undecaying fulness of life. And so when it is said of God, that he is invisible, though that be a negative term, such a being as cannot be seen, the meaning is, that his being is of that high and glorious excellency as not to be liable and subject to so mean a thing as the sight of our eye; it is too fine, too bright and glorious, for so mean and low a faculty to reach unto. And,

(6.) You must note this, that any particular excellency that men attribute or ascribe to God, it must always be understood to be ascribed to him in the highest pitch of perfection, and not with that diminution wherewith we behold the shadow of such things to be accompanied in the creature. And therefore, we must take heed of debasing the excellencies of the Divine nature, by confining, concerning them, to that which only gives some faint representation of them among us. We speak of several things that are real excellencies among the creatures; as quickness of sense, to be able presently to feel whatsoever is noxious and hurtful: this sense of pain is in the creature a perfection; but we are not to conceive any such thing in God; but we are to conceive that which is transcendent in him, that comprehends in itself the power of giving such and such perfections to the creature; so as that those things are eminently, constantly, only in him which, speaking of this and that particular perfection, is in a distinct, formal notion in the creature. We must not say, that this or that we behold in the creature is in him, but some transcendent excellency that doth virtually and eminently comprehend it; as when the Psalmist tells us, "He that planted the eye, doth he not see? and he that formed the ear, doth not he hear? and he that teacheth man knowledge, doth not he know?" we are not to think that there is such seeing, or such hearing with God, or any kind of sensation as is with us; but there is that transcendent excellency in him, that doth eminently contain all these in a far more glorious manner than we can conceive. These things it is fit we should note generally, concerning the Divine attributes, or perfections, as a ground for somewhat more distinctly, though very briefly, concerning these attributes or perfections of God, particularly considered.

But before we pass from this discourse, of what is of

more general import concerning them, give me leave to suggest somewhat to you that may be of present use, and that may influence practice, and tend to better the hearts and spirits of us, who are now called to hear about such a subject; "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect." So our Lord, who was a teacher come forth from God, on one of his great errands, doth direct us to conceive concerning him. I pray let our thoughts stay here a little, and meditate, and pause awhile; both on this Subject here spoken of, and that which is affirmed concerning this Subject.

[1.] The Subject spoken of, "Your Father which is in heaven." This NAME, "your Father," should carry a very attractive sound with it to every ear, and to every heart among us. It is very unfit that we should, any of us, sleep and slumber under the mention of this name, this title given to God, "your Father." Let us bethink ourselves: Can we call God Father? It is a thing to be thought on—with much caution; and then, if that hath produced any effect, and reached any good issue with us it ought to be thought on—with high consolation.

First, With great caution. "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect:" when we find that some are addressed by our blessed Lord, with the supposed capacity of bespeaking God as their Father, would it not strike cold to any man's heart, that should have cause to think, "Am not I excluded? Am not I one of them that may not dare to take such a name into my mouth and apply it to him, to call him my Father? Doth not my own heart smite me, that I assume so much to myself as to say, God is my Father?" There were those that briskly and boldly pretended to it in our Lord's time. "We are not born of fornication, we have all one Father, even God," say some of these petulant hearers, John viii. 44. It ought to be seriously considered, "What godlike thing have I in me to bespeak me his child, or that may give me the confidence to call him my Father? What childlike dispositions do I find in me towards him? Is there that trust that becomes a child, that love, that dutifulness, that study to please him?" Let us consider whether we can call him Father, and our hearts not smite us, and tell us inwardly, this is a title that belongs not to thee to give. But if we can find it doth, it is a thing to be considered as with great caution.

Secondly, With high consolation afterwards. Can I indeed say, that he is my Father? What then can I have to complain of? what have I to fear? what have I to desire? what have I to crave beyond what this contains, and carries in it? And pray take heed of diminishing so great a thing to yourselves. Have you, upon a strict inquiry, reason to look upon yourselves as one of that regenerate seed which is peculiar and appropriate to God? carries his signature, his stamp, his image? It is then a very unworthy thing to your Father, to let your spirits sink. It should greaten your minds, it should make you to say within yourself, "Then am I to live far above the world. It is base for the children of such a Father to live mean, and lie low, and to grovel in the dust; and to let his own heart despond and sink within him, upon the less grateful aspect and appearances of things from this world. For alas! what is this world to me, if God be my Father?" And, "Your Father, which is in heaven is perfect." You must consider how this our Father is in heaven; not as confined there, not as if heaven did confine him, whom the "heaven of heavens cannot contain." And we should thereupon consider, that truly if heaven do not confine him, this earth ought not to confine me. If he be my Father, there should be no exclusive limits between him and me. If he be my Father so in heaven, as that though he hath his throne, the theatre of his glory, his court, and his retinue there above, yet he doth also diffuse a vital and essential presence throughout the creation, so as that this earth itself is not excluded, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; if I traverse the seas, wherever I come, there thou art," Psal. cxxxix. 7. I say, if heaven doth not contain him, but that he reacheth this earth too, I should thereupon think this earth should not so confine me, But I will reach him, and apply myself to him, and converse and lead my life with him. And since heaven is represented as the seat of his most glorious residence, we should always think ourselves to have concerns lying there above. I am not to be limited then to this base low earth, if I have a Father in heaven. It is intolerable hereupon, that we should live here upon earth, if we had renounced and quitted all claim to heaven, never looking up thither. What! Do we forget that our Father is there? There he dwells in glory, there he beholds the dwellers upon earth, and looks into the very inmost motions of our thoughts, and workings of our spirits, from day to day, and from moment to moment; if he see a mind carried after vanity all the day long, will he not say, "What! is such a one one of the offspring of heaven, but hath no business there, who never minds any thing but this base earth?" Shall he have cause to observe this concerning us, and thus to judge and censure us from day to day? "These are the children of the earth, sons of the earth, they have nothing to do in heaven, they never look up thither." Such words standing here in the Bible, "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" methinks they should make strange impressions upon our spirits when we come to look on them and seriously consider them.

[2.] And then what is affirmed concerning this Subject, (though I must not spend time upon that now,) he is perfect, every way perfect. We may yet, by the way, see what ground of reproof there is here for us, that we so little adore, and so little imitate this perfection. That God is not greater in our eyes when we are beholding him, and considering, that whatsoever our minds can conceive of excellency, we find it in him in the highest perfection, and yet we adore him not, we take no notice of that glorious One, how sad is the case when even this itself is a continual increase of guilt upon us, that we know so much of God, that a poor creature should have cause to say, "I should have been far more innocent if I had known less, and been less capable of knowing God. I might have been an innocent creature, in comparison, if I had not known so much." To know him to be so perfectly holy and not imitate him, to know him to be so good and not to trust him, to love him, to depend upon him, and to seek union with him; to know him to be so perfect, and content myself with my own imperfection, when according to this rule of our Lord we should be "perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Preached May 18th, 1691.

LECTURE XVIII.*

2. But I come now to give, in the second place, some more distinct account of some, at least, of the more eminent of the attributes of God. And I shall begin with that which must be understood as comprehensive of all the rest, and that is, of the DIVINE ALL-SUFFICIENCY. This is the summary perfection of God; his all-sufficiency. And as the verse where the text lies, saith, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," so elsewhere, is the Divine all-sufficiency represented to us as the ground and pattern of that perfection which is required in us, Gen. xvii. 1. "I am God all-sufficient: walk before me and be thou perfect." The word there used is, in some translations, rendered all-mighty, in others, all-sufficient, *El-Shaddai*. They indeed seem to me to give the more congruous account of the etymology of that word that do read it all-sufficient, deriving it not from *Shadda*, that signifies to destroy, to lay waste, which yet is comprehended no doubt (that is the power of doing so) in the notion of almightiness, but rather deriving it from a word that signifies sufficiency with the pronominal particle he: He that is sufficient, God that is sufficient, *El-Shaddai* or that is self-sufficient. And he is so self-sufficient, either understanding it to be a sufficiency arising from himself or a sufficiency serving for himself. Either way he is self-sufficient; by a sufficiency that speaks him to be all to himself, a sufficiency arising and springing up within

himself, or a sufficiency to himself, as having enough in himself to enjoy without being beholden, without depending upon any thing without himself. And such all-sufficiency spoken of God must needs mean, He that is of himself, sufficient for himself, must needs be sufficient for all the creation besides. If of himself there be a sufficiency in him for all his own perfections, there must be a sufficiency for all that communication that the creature can any way stand in need of. This is that attribute, that comprehensive one, that we shall in the first place say somewhat to.

And I shall say the more of this, because it is so vastly comprehensive as hath been said, and as the matter is plain in itself that it is. It is the same thing that is meant by that fulness that we find again and again, in Scripture, attributed to God, that πληρωμα του Θεου, "That you may be filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii. 19. Not that there needs any great fulness to fill us. A very little thing will do it; and it signifies nothing to the vastness of the plentitude of the ocean, that a nut-shell or a minute vessel may be filled; but it is the greatness of the expression that I here note, "the fulness of God;" how vast, how immense, how profound an abyss must that be! In Eph. i. 23. we read of the "fulness of him that filleth all in all;" that filling fulness: it is another fulness that is meant there in that form of expression where, most condescendingly, the church of Christ in this world is spoken of as his fulness. But whose fulness is it? The "fulness of him that filleth all in all." Even he, notwithstanding his vast and boundless self-fulness, doth yet vouchsafe to be filled in respect of that union that he is pleased to take people out of this world into with his own blessed self. We read (Col. ii. 9.) of "all the fulness of the Godhead" dwelling in flesh, as it were, embodied in flesh, which we must understand still is the same fulness, when it is deposited, when it is, as it were, so disposed for communication. It is not another fulness from the original Divine fulness, but the same under a new relation wherewith it now comes to be clothed. As when also, in that Col. i. 19. it is said, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," fulness and all fulness, that it should dwell in him. It did dwell indeed in him originally and naturally in the person of the Son, but now it dwells in the Mediator, that being so lodged and settled, (as it were,) it now lies ready for communication to indigent creatures, necessitous creatures, empty creatures; such as we are, empty of every thing that is good, and of the desert of every thing that is so; and only designed and fitted by natural designation as so many "vessels of wrath" to be filled with wrath. Now all the fulness of God comes to be posited and clothed with that relation, to put on that aspect, with reference to us, that according to our need, measure, and capacity it is all for us. "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," with such a design that he might fill the sacrifice first, that was offered up, as you find the context speaks,—(Col. i. 19, 21.) "that he might make peace by the blood of his cross, and reconcile all things to himself:" and then, that he might fill the souls which that sacrifice had been accepted for, in the virtue of it, opening its own way to flow in to us. And another expression you have of this same perfection, (the all-sufficiency and plenitude of the Godhead,) to wit, that of his being "All in all." A most God-like phrase, wherein God doth in his own word speak so of himself, speaks like himself, at the rate of a God, with divine greatness and majestic sense. It is used with reference to the divine operations, 1 Cor. xii. 5. "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." But it is also spoken of the Divine Being with reference to his existence; He is All in all; or as in the mentioned place, (Ephes. i. 23.) "filleth all in all." In the final state, when all the great designs of God are compassed and brought about, then is he more entirely, fully, and immediately to be All in all. He will be more conspicuously so then: he is now so indeed, as it hath not escaped the notice of heathens themselves, who tell us, that whatsoever we see is Jupiter, and whatsoever we are moved by is Jupiter: that one universal mind doth work through all the universe, and mingles itself with the vast body of the creation. So is Christ, in whom is all the fulness of God, as was told before,) he is said to be "All in all." Here is an All in an all, a comprehending All and comprehended all; that is, an uncreated All, and a created: the latter contained in the former, the former containing the latter, in-wrapping it, infolding it, diffusing itself any where throughout it, and in all, and over all, and through all. And indeed, that created all is a little, most contemptible little all, in comparison of the all-comprehending, uncreated fulness, that involves the other in as great a disproportion as you may suppose an atom, a little mote or particle of dust comprehended in the whole earth, or a minute drop in the vast ocean, that swallows it up and runs through it and through it; so is the all of this creation (as great as it may appear to our little narrow minds and thoughts) swallowed up in the uncreated All, so as that in comparison of that, it is nothing. All nations come under this notion, but "as the drop of a bucket, and the small dust of the balance, and lighter than nothing," as confessing it impossible to speak diminishingly enough of the littleness of the creature, in comparison of the Divine All, "less than nothing." Indeed, simple nothing cannot vie with all fulness, with the immense plenitude of substantial beings. But that that seems to be newly stept forth out of nothing, that, it may be, will pretend to vie, and therefore that is so much the more despicable, even more despicable than mere nothing: mere nothing hath no competition with it to that vast plenitude and fulness of Being; but there may seem somewhat of competition in that which is just stept forth out of nothing: and therefore, that is despised as less than nothing; for mere nothing is not so despicable as that which is just risen out of nothing when it is brought into any kind of compare with the infinite, immense All.

But to speak yet a little more particularly and distinctly concerning this most perfect all-sufficiency and fulness of God, (as it can be possible to us to speak and hear of so great a thing,) I shall speak somewhat to the nature of it, what sort of fulness or plenitude this all-sufficient, perfect fulness is. And then—speak somewhat of the purposes which it answers and is most to apt to answer.

1. Somewhat of the nature of it. And for that, our best way of opening and unfolding it will be to consider these two things, namely, what it contains, and—after what peculiar it doth contain what it must be understood to carry in it: that is, the contents and the properties of this fulness; what it contains, and with what peculiar and distinguishing characters it doth contain it.

(1.) For the contents of this most absolute and perfect fulness of God, all-sufficient fulness; it contains all that we can think, and indeed all that we cannot think. It contains all being, and all life, all motive and active power, all knowledge and all wisdom, and all goodness; every thing that is excellent, valuable, and desirable in all the kinds, and in all the degrees of perfection conceivable, in reference thereunto. I shall not speak more distinctly now, in reference to that head, because under other heads that we are afterwards to speak a little (though but a little) particularly to, there will be more occasion to discourse of these severally. But we come,

(2.) To consider of the characters of this fulness, the properties of it, whereunto it must be understood to contain what it doth contain. And so,

[1.] It is a self-original fulness, a fulness that ariseth from itself. It is the highest fountain itself, and not fed from any higher, which is the signification of that title, or that name by which God was pleased to make himself known to Moses, "I Am," and a little more largely "I Am that I am." A name so expressive of this plenitude and fulness of being and all-perfection of God; so aptly and naturally expressive thereof, that it hath obtained naturally easily in the pagan world, as that inscription testifies in the temple, which I formerly named, "I am that which I was, and that which is, and that which shall be, and let any man at his peril disclose my veil." And we are told by some of the ancients in the Christian church, that the notions which Plato doth so abound with, he learnt in Egypt, and came by them, it is most probable, and as they think, as having been communicated from some of the Israelites to some of the Egyptian priests with whom he afterwards conversed, that is, with those of them to whom those traditions came some centuries of years afterwards. And that this fulness is self-original, or self-originate, they must always appre-

hend, who do apprehend that any such thing as Deity could only be of itself, from itself. A Being of that sort and kind, as unto which not to be, was always repugnant; and so that it owes whatsoever it is, or whatsoever it hath in itself, to that peculiar excellency of its own nature, which was always necessary to it, to be what it is; can receive nothing *aliunde*, from without, and can lose nothing, or suffer no detraction of what it is, or hath already belonging to it. This is "I am," the stable and permanent Being that is by itself what it is. That, then, is the character under which we are to conceive of this divine fulness, of this perfect all-sufficiency; that it is self-originate: he being the perpetual, everlasting Spring and Fountain of it to himself. "With thee is the fountain of life," Psal. xxxvi. 9. There, being is in its first Fountain, and life is in its first Fountain. To that, all things else that be and live, and that have any thing of motive and active power, they participate all from hence; "In him we live and move and have our being," as the apostle expresseth it, Acts xvii. 28. For which he there quotes a pagan poet; and likewise for that in the adjoining words, "we are all his offspring."

[2.] We are to conceive concerning this Divine fulness, that it is immense as well as self-originate. He is infinite, unbounded: and that it must needs be for the same reason, because it is self-originate: for causation speaks limitation, whatsoever causeth another, limits it; and that which is uncaused must be unlimited, *omnis limitatis est causata;* that which doth impart and communicate to another doth measure and bound its own communication; and from whence any thing hath that which it doth derive from another, thence it hath the bounds and limits of that which is derived. The limits of the derivation proceed from the original. Therefore it is plain whatever is uncaused must be unlimited, and so this fulness of God being self-originate without any superior cause, must needs be immense and infinite without bounds and limits. There is nothing to bound and limit, but he existing necessarily, when all things else do exist contingently, and by dependance upon his will and pleasure, it could not be but that he must engross all being, all life, and all perfection in himself, because there was nothing else existing besides or before that which did exist necessarily, that is himself, by which what was in him could not be any way limited. Therefore, so we are to conceive of the Divine fulness—that it is immense. It is then a perfection here spoken of God, which is not particular of this or that special kind, but which is most properly absolute and universal, to wit, of all kinds taken together, with all the several degrees that can come within the compass of each several kind. So metaphysicians are wont to distinguish of perfection, into that which is simple or absolute, and that which is *sui generis* of its own particular kind, that which hath all that belongs to that kind in it, may be said to be perfect in its own kind. That which hath the essence and properties of gold may be said to be perfect gold, and especially if it be pure from dross, and doth exclude every thing that is alien from it, if it be pure. That is the notion of pure: *purum est quod est plenum sui, that is pure that is full of itself*, and hath no admixture of any thing alien from it. So may a thing be said to be perfect in its own particular kind, when it is full of itself, and when it is free from admixture of any thing else. But the Divine nature (as is evident) is infinite and immense; is not perfect of this or that particular kind, but of all kinds whatsoever; that is, of all that is excellent and valuable; yea, every thing of all being, being included and comprehended in it. Not formally, for that would make God and the creature all one, but eminently and transcendently, that is, it being in the Divine power to determine whether any thing besides should be extant, or not extant. And so he is the Root of being to every thing that is, and the Spring of life to every thing that lives, and the Fountain of all excellency to every thing that can partake of it. And therefore, his perfections or fulness is not of this or that particular kind; if it were so, it were a limited fulness, a bounded fulness; but it is a fulness that comprehends all kinds together eminently and transcendently in itself. As the root of the tree doth comprehend all the branches, that is, virtually, it comprehends that virtue in it, and transmits that which extends to all the branches, and as the very seed did virtually contain the whole tree once in itself; so all the creation was contained in God, before it, by his appointment and command, stood forth into actual being. And,

[3.] It is hereupon an immutable fulness. This Divine fulness admits of no alteration, either by augmentation or diminution. It can neither be made more nor less than it is; either would make a change, and no change can have place in that Being which is necessary. The Divine Being, and all that plenitude and fulness that belongs to it, being self-original, it must be necessary: it could spring from no other, therefore it must be of itself what it is; and no other imaginable reason can be assigned why such a Being doth exist, but only that peculiar excellency of its own nature, to which it was repugnant not to exist. Hereupon therefore, this is the only necessary Being, and that which is necessarily what it is, can never be other than what it is, can never vary, and therefore that "Father of lights (as the blessed God is mentioned under that names James i. 17.) is without variableness or shadow of turning." Without so much as the umbrage of a change, there is not the shadow of variation with him. But before the creation was, he was the same, and through all the successions of time when that creation is in being, he is still the same; and if the creation should drop back again into nothing, he were the same. Unto that which is necessarily what it was first, nothing can supervene, because it hath its whole being necessarily, so that there can be no addition to it; and then there can be no detraction from it, no diminution, because it hath what it hath necessarily; it is essential to be what it is. And therefore,

[4.] This plenitude of God must be everlasting, this all-sufficiency, this perfection, must be eternal. For if there can be no variation in any, the least degree, much less is it conceivable there should be a cessation of the whole Being. A variation in any, the least degree, is altogether impossible to that which is necessarily what it is; and thereupon the eternal permanency of it in the same state must needs be consequent. Hence those amazing expressions about the Divine Being, "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God," Psalm xc. 2. Set yourselves to contemplate God; you must needs yield yourselves to be lost and swallowed up in your minds upon the contemplations of that which is "from everlasting to everlasting." And so that most emphatical expression, of his inhabiting eternity; "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and holy place," Isaiah lvii. 15. But before that, he was his own place, and indeed all the creation is rather vested in him, than he in any thing. Before time was, or any creature was, he had nothing to inhabit but his own eternity, that is, his own eternal self; for eternity and the eternal One are the same thing.

Thus you have some account of the nature of the all-sufficient, perfect fulness of God, both from the content and properties or perfections thereof; what it contains, to wit, all being, all life, all motive power, all wisdom, all knowledge, and whatsoever excellency besides you can conceive, or all that is conceivable, and indeed, all that is inconceivable by any created mind. And then, under what characters, as it is a self-originate fulness, an immense fulness, an unalterable fulness, incapable of any augmentation or diminution, and as it is an everlasting fulness.

2. The next thing is to show you what purposes this perfect, all-sufficient fulness of God may answer. And indeed, it answers all that is any way desirable should be answered, or that it were to be wished should be answered. For,

(1.) It answers the corresponding purpose of its own felicity, to be an everlasting felicity to himself, where there is the only correspondency, that it is any way possible it should otherwise be; should any way be found between the fruitive faculty and the object. Here is an immense and boundless object for an immense fruitive faculty: nothing could satisfy God but God: there is a capacity not otherwise to be filled up. It was to be answered by nothing but himself, and therefore we must not suppose that there are any additions any way to that felicity from any thing without himself. He only enjoys himself and takes pleasure in his own designs. When he hath designs upon such

poor creatures as we, he only pleaseth himself in himself, n his bountifulness, the benignity and the kindness of his own design. When he did (he must be supposed to have lone) even in the days and ages of eternity always retain with himself a design, "I will raise up such and such creatures;" such in particular as any of us; "I will in their proper time and season raise them up out of nothing, on purpose to take them into a communion and participation with me in my own felicity, my own blessedness." What s it he was pleased with? was it that he loved us or delighted in us? He was self-pleased with the kindness and benignity of his own design: not that any thing in us could draw his eye, his love, or his delight, but his kindness and goodness therein was its own reason. He showeth mercy because he will show mercy. It was not that one was better than another, but from that goodness of his that is invariable, and can never be better than himself, the complacency that it was always apt to take in its own designments. From hence it is, that he hath any such thing as delectation in a creature, only as he hath freely placed a design and made it terminate upon such a one, and so is pleased in that kindness and goodness which he hath in himself, and not in any delectableness that was previously in the object. For as to that, there was no more in one than another, and if it were for that reason as such, then it must have followed that all would have a like participation in the felicity of the Divine Being. But this is the eminent great purpose that the Divine all-sufficient fulness serves for even for his own eternal and invariable felicity. Whence he hath so frequently the title and name of "the ever-blessed God;" his own blessedness being his very essence, or essential to himself; so that he was never to be known under another name, or conceived of under another notion, than as the blessed One, the Fountain of all blessedness; "The glorious Gospel of the blessed God," saith the apostle, 1 Tim. i. 11. And "the blessed and only Potentate," 1 Tim. vi. 15. And "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore," 2 Cor. xi. 31. And so of Christ as he is God, he is said to be "over all, God blessed for ever," Rom. ix. 5. "Blessed for ever," that is, only in himself as the only correspondent and adequate object of his own fruition. And,

(2.) His most perfect divine fulness, appears to have been sufficient for the creation of this world: and (which is but doing the same thing continually) preserving it ever since it was created, even until now; not only bringing it into being a rude mass of being; but settling and conserving of order in it, and that variety and distinction of creatures, which we behold, and which indeed we must suppose to be the only effect of the all-sufficient perfection of a God. The very being of such a world speaks his power; but the order that is in it, and the variety of creatures wherewith it is replenished, and the continual preservation of those distinct kinds and species through so many successive ages; so that what this or that plant is, or at least was, so many thousand years ago, it continues to be the same, a thing of the same kind, in the same rank or class of being still as it was. All this is by the all-sufficient, perfect fulness of a Deity that could answer such purpose as this, to make such a mass of created beings exist and arise out of nothing; and that so much of order and distinction of kinds should obtain and be preserved even in this natural world, through so many successive ages unto this day. It was this that the perfect all-sufficiency of God did, and doth continually serve for. And,

(3.) For the government of the intelligent world; so that wheresoever he hath intelligent creatures, he can, by a secret touches upon the mind, steer them and act them this way and that at his own pleasure; make great numbers of people at once to agree in one and the same design, all of them; as God did touch their minds in making Saul king. And that is one instance that shows what is done throughout all the world, and all other ages, where all minds lie under the agency and influence of one supreme, universal Mind. And otherwise, how were it possible that all should conspire and agree to serve the same purpose and to do the same thing. And again,

(4.) This perfect, all-sufficient fulness serves for the defeating of the designs of his enemies; so that he can with the greatest facility and ease, consume adversaries with a fire not blown, and make them "perish like their own dung;" and blow upon them with the breath of his nostrils, and make every thing of opposition vanish when he will. And thereupon, as being perfectly Master of his own designs, and having every thing in his own power, with the times and seasons and ways of doing them, he lets enemies run on, foreseeing still at a distance their day that is coming. He knows their day is coming, and in the mean time sits in heaven and laughs at them, "the Most High hath them in derision;" them who say, "Come, let us break their bands asunder, and let us cast away their cords from us:" as it is in the 2nd Psalm.

(5.) It answers the purpose of sustaining and preserving his own, the people that he hath collected and chosen out of this world to be peculiar to himself, the whole community of them, and every particular soul belonging to that community, so as to lose none of them. He bears them up and carries them through all the temptations and conflicts and trials and exercises that they meet with here, in a sojourning state and in a warfaring state, so as that they are kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. And then,

(6.) And lastly, this perfect and all-sufficient fulness serves for their final satisfaction and blessedness, when they shall be brought into that region, into his "presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. 11. And that which is felicity enough for himself, will surely be enough for them too.

LECTURE XIX.*

But now, in the next place, I shall speak further to you of some of the most eminent and noted of those attributes and perfections of God which are comprehended in this general one, and concerning the order of speaking to them, I shall not be much solicitous. Some distinguish them into negative and positive. But that distinction I reckon less material; because that those they call negative ones are so only verbally, there being somewhat most really positive, that is comprehended under such negative terms, as infinite, and immortal, and immense, and the like. They are usually distinguished into communicable and incommunicable, as hath been occasionally told you already; the former whereof, being those attributes of God of which there is some image and resemblance under the same name among the creatures.

The Incommunicable Attributes are those whereof there is no direct resemblance among the creatures, nor the very name thereof justly or properly to be given to any among them, or to any thing that is to be found among them. And for this distinction of the Divine attributes, they speak very properly and congruous to the nature of the thing, who tell us, that in the description of God, the former sort of these attributes (the communicable ones) do serve to express his nature more generally, or serve to supply the room of a *generous* in a definition. And that the incommunicable attributes serve to supply the place of a *difference* in a definition restraining (as it is in the business of a difference to do) that general nature, that is presupposed.

And others again distinguish these several ways, that is, some do call every thing a divine attribute, which may be any way affirmed concerning God. When some others of them do only mean by a divine attribute, that which is affirmed concerning him, (as the logicians are wont to speak,) "*Loquitur quid*," not "*in quo*;" as when it is said, "God is a Spirit," that they do not reckon a divine attribute which is only to answer the question, What he is? But those things only are to be called attributes, or divine perfections, that do speak more distinguishably concerning his nature, to show what a one he is, or what a peculiar sort or kind of being he is. And so for one class of divine

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attributes some reckon his natural properties, which do some way specify his nature.

And then for the second kind, the faculties which (according to our way of conceiving things) we must attribute to him. And then for a third sort, the exercises that do reside in those several faculties, and for a fourth, those that do imitate the affections that are in us belonging to the rational nature, as it is to be found with us, such as love, anger, desire, delight, or the like.

I do not think fit indeed that we should tie ourselves to any such distribution. What I mentioned before, of communicable attributes and incommunicable, carries its own evident reason with it, and its own light to every one that observes things. There are some divine excellencies whereof there is an image and resemblance in the creatures fitly mentioned, under the same name in him and in them, though they do not signify the same thing in them as they do in him, but only the image or resemblance of such a thing. And then there are those that are *incommunicable*, and which neither in name nor in likeness can agree to the creature. This is a very plain distinction, obvious to any one that considers.

For his *incommunicable attributes*, they are such as these, and I shall but only mention them. As,

1. His SIMPLICITY, absolute uncompoundedness, all excellencies and perfections meeting and being united in him, in the absolute unity of his own nature, without division, without composition, and without mixture.

2. His IMMUTABILITY, by which he is always invariably eternally what he is. "I Am what I Am," without "shadow of turning," (as the apostle James's emphatical expression is,) there being not so much as the show of a change.

3. His SELF-EXISTENCE, or (which is all one) his necessary existence, or the necessity of his existence. That perfection of the Divine nature, by which he is so, as that it is simply impossible for him not to be, or ever not to have been, his essence involving existence in it, so as it is not with any thing besides: for as to any created being, it may be or it may not be; it may exist or not exist. But it is peculiar to the Divine Being to exist necessarily, so as that it cannot but exist: that is the same thing with self-existence, not existing from another, but existing only from himself. And,

4. His INFINITENESS, which comprehends divers things in it; for the infinity of the Divine Being, it is either extrinsical or intrinsical, extrinsical as it imparts some kind of relation to somewhat *ad extra*, or without; and so the extrinsical infiniteness of God is two-fold, that which respects time and that which respects space. That which respects time is eternity, and that infinitely exceeds all the measures of time. Consider God's duration in reference to time, and his duration is eternal, which is founded in his self-existence, or his necessary existence, was told you before. His being is of that peculiar kind, or hath that peculiar excellency belonging to it, that could never not be; and therefore must exist from eternity, and must be to eternity. This is his extrinsical infiniteness in reference to time. And there is his infiniteness in reference to space, which is extrinsical too. It is somewhat supposed without, or besides himself; though but supposed or but imagined. All that space which the Divine being doth occupy and possess; and this is his immensity. In reference to time, his infiniteness speaks eternity; in reference to space, his infiniteness speaks immensity, that which some understand to be his omnipresence. And indeed, it is mostly so, but not wholly, for omnipresence even as presence is a relative term, and refers to somewhat with which it may be said to be present, and so the Divine presence can refer to nothing besides himself, without the compass of the created universe, for there is nothing without that, that he can be present to. But his immensity hath an infinitely further reference, that is, to all the boundless, imaginable space (only imaginable) through which the Divine Being diffuseth itself. For not only is it truly said concerning him, he fills heaven and earth, "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord," Jer. xxiii. 24. But also, "the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain him," as it is said in that seraphical prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, "Will God indeed dwell with men on the earth, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain?" And so his infiniteness in reference to space, it doth, without any limits, go beyond and transcend this vast created universe, be that as vast as it can be supposed to be; and it must be supposed to be very vast indeed, by all that do set themselves to consider what is by human indication or inquiry to be found most considerable, and who allow themselves the liberty ever to think of that vast extent of created being, in comparison whereof not only our earth is but a point, but even that vortex that covers this part of the world to which the earth belongs, is but a mere point, that which contains our sun, and the other planets; all that is but a mere point in comparison of the rest of the universe. Consider that, and the vast extent thereof, and you must yet consider, all this is but a mere point in comparison of the vast amplitude of the Divine Being, concerning which we are to conceive there is not any point of conceivable space any where, but there the Divine Being is, and still infinitely beyond it. And indeed, it is fit we should give great scope to our thoughts, that we may as far as possible conceive in this respect worthily and greatly concerning that God whom we serve, and whose name we bear, and to whom we profess to be devoted ones.

But then there is his intrinsical infiniteness besides, that is, his infiniteness considered not with reference to any thing without him, but in reference to what he is in himself. And so it signifies the unfathomable profundity and depth of his essence, including all being itself, in all the kinds, in all the degrees, and in all the perfections thereof; so as that there is no being of any kind, or of any sort, which his being doth not some way or other comprehend, virtually at least: his being the radical Being from which all other beings spring.

Concerning these incommunicable attributes, or perfections of the Divine Being, I shall say no more to you than only to give you this summary and short account that I have given, because in our demonstrating the existence of a God it was impossible not to speak to these things: that was a thing not to be done without mentioning such things as these, even somewhat too in a way of demonstration, that demonstrating of them we might give some account of the Being whose existence we are to demonstrate. But now there are sundry other divine attributes that I shall speak a little more distinctly to, and which lie under that other head of

Communicable Attributes, and which therefore are more familiar, and ought to be so to ourselves, as having some image, some resemblance of them, under the same names, in us; all either have, or ought to have; some indeed have and cannot but have a resemblance in every intelligent creature, yea (and further than so) in every animate creature. And for those that fall under a moral consideration, they are such as ought to be in us, though they be not. These perfections of God are distinguished into natural, intellectual, and moral; or of his nature, mind, and will.

First, I shall consider his natural perfections: and,

1. I shall begin with that perfection of the Divine nature whereof there is in us some kind (and ought to be in other kinds) a resemblance or image under the same name. And that is, the DIVINE LIFE, the life of God. I do not mean it now in that sense wherein it is a thing either derived to us, or prescribed to us. As in the one or the other, or both of these senses, that expression must be used and understood, (Eph. iv. 18.) "being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their hearts," speaking of the Gentile world, and those Ephesians themselves, while as yet they were in a state of Gentilism. I do not, I say, speak of that life now which God requires us to live, and which he makes his own children to live. But I speak of that life which he lives himself; and in respect whereof he is so frequently in Scripture called "the Living God," that excellency of his Being, which he many times attests, to add weight and solemnity and emphasis unto his protestations to men, to assure them that this is so or not so, or that this or that he doth or doth not, or will do or will not do. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." And so, upon sundry

like occasions, that form of protestation is used by him: "As I live I will do so or so, or it is so and so;" which intimates this to be a most glorious excellency of the Divine Being, and that which he lays a mighty stress upon himself, and would have us to do so too. It is that which should highly raise our thoughts and apprehensions of the Divine Being, to consider him as the living God: and therefore the properties of that life by which he lives, (after the general conception of life itself,) would be worth our while a little to stay upon. We can have no other general conception of life, but that it is a self-active principle. It speaks a sort of self-activeness in the subject wherein it is: and so, being spoken of God, it attributes that to him in the highest perfection that can be thought, and indeed doth suppose it to be in him, in a perfection infinitely beyond what we can conceive: that is, that he is by the excellency of his own Being, a perpetual fountain of life to himself. It is that which is included in the notion of a spirit, though it is not expressive of all that is signified by that notion. It is but an inadequate conception of what is carried in the notion of a spirit. A spirit, it is, as such, (though that be not all,) a self-active being, a being of self-actuating vigour, that can move itself within itself. And that is the most full and distinct conception of what we have of life. But taking that for the general conception, there are peculiar excellencies of the Divine Life, that distinguish it from life any where else. As,

(1.) His is absolutely self-originate. No other life is so; but his is absolutely self-originate. All other life is derived, participated; even such creatures to which life is essential, yet their life is but participated; for admit life s essential, (as it is to all created spirits as such,) yet inasmuch as their being is participated and derived, so is their life too; and their being, being a spiritual being, (though a created being,) life is so essential to it, for if it ceaseth to live it ceaseth to be, and so its life and being are not separable things. It is not so with that life which our bodies do partake of; even in ourselves, our bodies and our souls have two very distinct sorts of life, our bodies have but a borrowed life, a united life which they borrow from the soul that is within them, and unto which they are united. That soul may retire and part, and then the body dies, and yet it is the same body that it was before; so that if it cease to live, it doth not thereby cease to be. These bodies of ours may cease to live, though not cease to be, because their life is a borrowed life from another: they have it from the soul. But the soul, that hath life in itself, essential to it; so that it cannot cease to live, but it must cease to be. But though it be so, yet its essence and life are but derived from that great Original Life, and from that great Original Being whose life we now speak of. He is the well-spring of life, (Psal. xxxvi. 9.) "With thee is the fountain of life." It is equally impossible, as was said before, for him either to cease to live, or cease to be; whereas to us this impossibility is only supposed, it is only a suppositive impossibility. If we should cease to live, we should cease to be too, in reference to these souls of ours. But it is positive as to God, that he can neither cease to live nor cease to be. His is therefore an absolute self-original life. He hath life in himself, or by himself, as that expression is, John v. 26. "As the Father (who we have told is our Father) which is in heaven is perfect," perfect in this respect, hath life in himself, a perpetual spring of life within himself; so hath the Son life in himself, as he is God, and as he is God-man; life to communicate and derive from himself to quicken whom he will, as it is in that context. And then,

(2.) This life of God, as it is a self-original, so it is a self-communicative life; it is a self-communicating life. Not in the same kind, but it doth contain in itself eminently that life which it makes others to live, which it imparts to creatures. Indeed they cannot live that same life, for he being essential unto him in whom it originally is, to communicate his life were to communicate his essence, and so we make the creature God, which is impossible. But he contains eminently in himself that life by which, formally, he makes the creature live. And so in that respect, his Divine Life is self-communicative, casual, efficient, making those to live to whom he doth impart it. With him is the well-spring of life. Now these two things are carried in the notion of a fountain: 1st, That there be a perpetual spring in it, and 2nd, that there be a communication and efflux, a deriving of streams from that spring. These two things are carried in the very notion of a fountain. And so as he is the well-spring of life it imports,

[1.] That life that is in him to be self-original, he is the perpetual Spring of it, in himself and to himself. And then,

[2.] Self-communicative, continually deriving streams issuing and flowing out to the creatures, so as to quicken whom he will, as it is said, "the Son doth, in that," John v. 20. And,

[3.] This life of God is an indeficient life; a life that cannot decay, a life that cannot fail, a life that cannot languish, life always in the highest perfection, every thing in God being God, and therefore no more capable of diminution or decay, than the being of God is, which, as you have heard, is a necessary being, and therefore can never be otherwise than as he is, never more perfect, nor ever less perfect. And,

[4.] It is universal life. The life which belongs to the Divine Being, is universal; that is, it carries all kind of life eminently in it, not formally but eminently. You know that there is a great variety of the kinds of life among the creatures; but all comes from one Fountain; and therefore that life which doth belong to the blessed God himself, it must be a universal sort of life, a universality of life, all kinds of life are summed up there, not formally but eminently, there being no kind of life that is lived by any creature, from the most excellent to the most mean and abject, but the power of giving it, the power of imparting it, being in himself who is the Original of life: he hath it within his own power to make that creature live this or that sort of life suitable to the capacity of its own nature, and it is observable to this purpose, that in that passage, Psal. xlii. 8. where the Psalmist saith, "my prayer shall be to the God of my life;" in the Hebrew it is plural, to the God of my lives. And you know, a man (and more may be said in this kind concerning a holy man, a saint) lives several sorts of lives, as he lives a vegetative life, first the life of a plant, and then the sensitive life; the life of an animal, and then the rational life; the life of a man, and then, if he be a saint, as you know the Psalmist was, a holy life. Now all these lives are comprehended together in this one Fountain. "My prayer shall be to the God of my lives." It is he that makes me live all these several ways that I do live. As I live the life of a plant, I have it from him; as I live the life of an animal, I partake that life from him; as I live the life of a man, a rational creature, I still partake that life from him; and as I live the life of a saint, a holy man, I partake that life from him too, which carries the nearest resemblance with it of his own life.

And thus we are to conceive of our Father which is in heaven, to be perfect in respect of this high and glorious excellency of life; self-original life, self-communicative life, indeficient life, and universal life, that contains all sorts and kinds of life eminently in itself.

And now to make some *Use* of this subject of the *life of God*, how highly should this raise our thoughts concerning that God whose name we bear, concerning our Father that is in heaven. It must highly serve to recommend him to us,

1. As the Object of our worship. What a glorious object of worship have we! How may our souls solace themselves every time we go to worship in the contemplation of this, "I am going to worship the living God!" So he is pleased to distinguish himself from the false gods, by this same epithet of the living One. Therefore, we have living and true pnt together distinctly concerning him. 1 Thess. i. 9. "To serve the living and true God." And it is with reference to the consideration of him as the glorious Object of our worship, that the apostle speaks of him, in Acts xiv. 15. when those ignorant barbarians, among whom he was, would have done worship unto him and Barnabas, he runs in among them and saith, "Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with yourselves, and preach to you that you should turn from these vanities to the living God, who made heaven and earth and all things therein. Our business is to bespeak you to be worship-

pers of the living God alone." Thus doth the word magnify him above the inanimate, senseless deities of the pagan world, who were wont to worship stocks and stones and the works of their own hands, and bow down and pray to a god that could not save. And how should we magnify to ourselves the Object of our worship, under this notion, and admire and bless God that he hath revealed himself to us, so as we are not left altogether ignorant whom we are to worship, that we do not worship altogether we know not what. We know the Object of our worship carries in it the reason of its own being worshipped, which renders it a rational worship. He is the living and so the true God whom we worship.

2. How highly should it recommend him to us as the Object of our trust. "Therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe," 1 Tim. iv. 10. and chap. vi. 17. "Charge them which be rich in this world that they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." How heart-satisfying an object of trust have we in this respect, considering God as the living God, the Fountain of an indeficient, never-failing, self-original, and universal life, in all the excellencies and perfections of life.

3. What an object of fear have we even in this conception of God, or from this divine attribute. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31. A man may be angry with me, and he dies, and then his anger dies with him; but it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands who never dies, the hands of the everlasting God. Who would not value his favour as that wherein stands life? It should mightily raise our apprehensions concerning God to conceive of him so. And,

4. It highly recommends him to us as the Object of our imitation. For this is one of the divine excellencies or perfections, whereof there is a *minesis*, a resemblance under the same name in us. We do all of us live (as was said) several sorts of lives wherein we do resemble God. But we should most of all resemble him in a holy life, such of us who are raised from death to life, or shall be so. And herein it is the duty of every believer to resemble him. This is matter of precept, a thing capable of being put into a command. It is no matter of duty to us to imitate him in the other kinds of life, but in this kind of life it is matter of duty to imitate him in it, that is, in the perfection of that life which is therefore called the life of God, because it is prescribed us by God, enjoined us by God, and it is that wherein we are to imitate God. And therefore it is called, even as it is in us, "the life of God," Ephes. iv. 18. Others not yet reconciled to God, not brought home, but remain in their natural, unconverted state, they are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts." We are to consider God, the living God, as the Object of our imitation; and therefore, should reflect with just severity upon ourselves; "Do we pretend a relation with the living God, and say he is our God? O! then, what mean our dead prayers, our dead duties, our dead hearts! that we let them be dead, and do not strive and wrestle and contend with them, to get them up to this raised perfection of life wherein we are to resemble God, and to express a visible conformity to him!" It is a severe rebuke which is put upon the Sardian church, "Thou hast a name to live and art dead." It is plain, he doth not speak of a total death, or as if there was nothing of spiritual life among them, for in the next words he saith, "be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die." There were great degrees of deadness, but strengthen (saith he) the remains of life, "the things that remain that are ready to die;" and see how it is enforced, "for I have not seen thy works perfect before God." Your heavenly Father is in this respect perfect, as he is the living God, as life is in him in the highest pitch of perfection and excellency; "but I have not found your works perfect before me, as your heavenly Father is perfect;" therefore "strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die;" that your life may shine in lustre and glory more suitably and conformably unto the divine life, unto the life of God himself. But now,

* Preached June 26th, 1691.

LECTURE XX.

2. In the next place I shall go on to speak somewhat concerning the POWER OF GOD, which is another natural perfection in him, and is next of kin to the life of God. Once have I heard this, twice hath it been spoken, that power belongeth unto God, as in that Psal. lxii. 11. It is in him as in its native seat and subject. It belongs unto him. Nothing is more appropriate, more peculiar to God than power: and it so belongs to him as it can to no other. If we speak of strength, lo, he is strong, (as the expression is in Job,) implying all created power is not to be spoken of in comparison with him. All other power is not to be named power, nor worthy to bear that name. "Your heavenly Father is perfect" in this, as well as other respects; power is with him in perfection; the perfection of power belongs to him.

And here, concerning the power of God, I shall give you some instances and some properties of it.

(1.) Some instances of it. As,

[1.] That it hath been the sole, productive cause of this great creation. Consider all this vast creation as resolved back again into nothing; and then consider it all springing up out of nothing (as it were) at once. How vast a power is this! Whatsoever in all the whole universe of created things you see or hear of, or can think of; all this is raised up out of nothing by the divine power. To bring any thing out of nothing, how vast a power would it require! how far surpassing any human, any created power! If you could but suppose all the powers in all the world, if the whole creation were to be combined and united together only for this one single purpose, to make one single atom, the least that can be thought to be raised out of nothing, you would easily apprehend it would never be. If all the world were assembled to contrive and unite their power to make a grain of dust out of nothing, they must all confess it infinitely above them. Then to have so vast a creation as this made to arise out of nothing, at once from nothing come to being, how should it overwhelm us to think of it; all that we now behold in being, and so far beyond, so inconceivably beyond what we can behold it to be. This earth of ours, as spacious as it is, is but a mere point, compared with our own vortex; but a part, but a little corner, of the creation, and that but a mere point in comparison with the rest of the universe; and all this spoken out of nothing into being by the great Creator; the word of Divine power but saying, "Let it be," and it was. Lift up your eyes on high, as the prophet's direction is, Isa. xlix. 18. and think who hath created all this; when you behold the sun, and moon, and stars, the vast expanse of the heavens, and all the ornature thereof. And again,

[2.] There is the continual sustentation of this world, once created and made, which is the same momently expense of power; for all created being, if not continually sustained, must, by its own natural mutability, every moment be dropping into nothing. So that here is the same power put forth as if a new world were created every moment. And then,

[3.] That all the motion that is any where to be found, throughout the whole universe, continually proceeds so from it, that the divine power is the continual spring of it. A wonderful thing to think of! We are apt to have our thoughts soon excited and awakened concerning the divine power when we see some wonderful instance of it fall out, besides the ordinary course. When we behold the effects of some violent wind and impetuous tempest: if we see trees torn up by the roots, houses shattered down all to pieces, mountains torn asunder, the bowels of the earth ript open, we straightway think these to be great instances of a mighty power. But the power is incomparably greater that works continually and every moment in all the motion that is any where through the universe, in the most still, and silent, and steady, and composed way. The power that continually, but silently, turns about the mighty orbs of heaven, and the great luminaries that are in it, and, as some think, this very earth itself, in that still,

unobserved way that we can take no notice of, which if it be, is incomparably less than that the so inconceivably greater body of the sun should be moved in so inconceivably greater a space, so much larger in circuit, so vastly large, with that celerity that must answer what we expect and see every day. What must that power be that goes forth in this? Such motion of the heavenly bodies that we find move the sun, and moon, and other planets, besides all the innumerable stars, multitudes whereof are so unspeakably greater than the body of the sun, and that so vastly greater than this earth of ours; and all these continually turned about by a motive power; which because it is steady and constant we are therefore so stupid as not to take notice of it, or adore what is doing by it every moment, without failure, without stop, even for one moment. We are to blame that we do not more use our thoughts this way, to aggrandize to ourselves the greatness of him that made all things, and us little inconsiderable parts of them all. And again,

[4.] That this power doth work constantly and steadily with nature in a natural way, and extraordinarily, whensoever he will to whom it belongs, against nature. Here is what doth demonstrate it to be the exceeding greatness of his power, it is vastly great, as it co-operates with nature, as it works with nature. And how vastly great doth it appear as it counterworks nature in several respects, and at his pleasure whose power it is. It was great power that could make such a thing as fire to burn, to seize and prey upon other matter, and devour and consume it. But how much greater power doth it require to make fire not to burn, to bind up the natural tendency of it, as in the instance of the three children! It was a great power to make that great element of water to flow along every where as he hath assigned its receptacles and channels; and greater again when he pleaseth to make it not to flow, to congeal, as it were, and to stand up the mighty waves on a heap. And again,

[5.] If we look a little into another sort of species, what a weighty instance of this power was it to support the manhood of Christ under those sufferings of his, which he, as to satisfaction for the sins of men, and in which capacity only he was capable of suffering; to wit, as he was man, for he could not suffer as he was God. That that man should be able to bear the weight and load of all that guilt, which he undertook to expiate by his blood, which blood was necessary to expiate it, and to lay a foundation for the preaching of the Gospel, which saith, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life:" that he did not sink under that weight and load of guilt, and under the power of divine wrath, when all our iniquities did meet on him: that he, one single man, should be sustained and borne up, when so vast a load and weight of guilt lay upon him: here was the power of the Godhead sustaining that one man. It was because he was Immanuel, "God with us," God in our nature. That that nature did not fail, did not sink under that mighty load; that that man should stand as the fellow of God, when the sword was drawn to strike that man his fellow; that he should stand against him and not be destroyed, and not be overcome, is a great power. And again, hereupon,

[6.] What an instance of the divine power was the resurrection of that man? Smitten he was, and smitten down unto death, into the grave. And yet out from thence he springs up anew, by a divine power, "and was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the Spirit of holiness, by which he was raised from the dead." It was an exceeding greatness of power, as you read, Ephes. i. 19. which he wrought in him, or exerted, or put forth in him, when he raised him from the dead. And again,

[7.] What an instance is it of the power of God, when he changes the heart of a sinner, when he reneweth and reduceth a lapsed, fallen, apostate, degenerate creature; that is, especially when he changeth his will, the primary, main seat of that mighty change. "Thy people shall be willing people in the day of thy power." Here is the perfection of divine power to be seen in this: for most plain is, as I said before about creation, that if all the power of all this world were combined together for this one effect, to alter the will of one single man, it could never be done; you know how to crush, how to tear him into a thousand pieces, but no man knows which way to change the will of a man, not in any instance whatsoever, unless God change it himself. In instances of common concernment, nobody hath power over another man's will; all the power of all this earth is not able to change my will if I have set it this way or that. But his people shall be a willing people in the day of his power: your heavenly Father is perfect, perfect in power, in that he knows, without doing violence to his creature, without offering any thing that shall be unsuitable or repugnant to its nature, to change its will. He knows how to govern his creatures according to their natures: though he knows how to rule and govern them, yea, to overrule them, contrary to their nature when he will, yet he chooses to govern his rational, intelligent creatures according to their nature, and so agreeably changes the hearts of men, according to that natural way wherein the human faculties are wont to work; a thing that all the powers of the whole world could never do besides. And again,

[8.] What an instance is it of his power to uphold the life of a regenerate soul, during its course through this world! A great instance this is, that their heavenly Father is perfect in power. For most certain it is, as soon as any one production of this kind appears, if there be a child born, a son of God born from above, all the powers of hell and darkness are presently at work, if it might be, to destroy this new, this divine production. But it is enabled to overcome. "He that is born of God keepeth himself, that the evil one toucheth him not;" and "he that is born of God overcometh the world." This is by a divine power annexing itself to, and working in, and with, this new creature. The apostle speaking of one weak in the faith, (Rom. xiv. 1.) weary in the faith, as the original signifies, shows that such a one might be received, but not to doubtful disputations: for God (saith he) is able to make him stand. This poor weakling, one that is weak in the faith, receive him, (saith he,) for God (as despicable a thing as he appears) is able to make him stand. Every new-born child is weak, and we must conceive so concerning every regenerate soul: he is at first weak, and they are always too weak, (God knows,) as long as they remain here in this world. They have distempers, weakening distempers, always about them. But concerning such a weakling, that it should be said, "God is able to make him stand," makes it to be an instance of a divine enabling power that ever he should be made to stand. And it is the like case where such are spoken of under the notion of bruised reeds, to make a bruised reed stand against all the shocks of hell, when all the infernal powers are engaged to overthrow it: God shows that he is able to make it stand. And thus it is with such a poor creature all the time of his abode upon earth, hell is engaged in a continual conflict against his precious life, and purposely and with a design to destroy that. But God is able to make it stand, it lives as a spark amidst the raging ocean, and is never extinct but always lives. What an instance of the Divine power is this! And again,

[9.] Restraining the wrath of man combined with the power of hell against his church in this world. He hath built this church upon a Rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. The design hath been always driven and the attempt continually renewed from age to age. One age hath been industriously at it to root religion out of the world, to extinguish the divine seed, but they could make nothing of it: another age rises up after them, "Come, (say they,) let us handle the matter far more wisely, and take better methods, and carry it more secretly, that we may do our business more securely, and see what we can do to extinguish and root out religion:" and so the age after that, and then the next after that, and so from age to age until this age, and yet the thing is not done: yet this church remains, and is still in being, and is yet propagating itself. This is owing to the perfection of divine power. Their Father which is in heaven is perfect, perfect in this power of his, by which he conquers all the powers which are engaged against his poor church in this world, he triumphs over the feeble and impotent attempts of men and devils. "He that sits in the heavens laughs, the Most High has them in derision." The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder thereof will he restrain, Psa. lxxvi.

10. The wrath of man he turns to his praise; he makes matter of praise and triumph to himself that the wrath of man goes forth; pleasing himself with this, "How shall these wretched creatures see themselves foiled and baffled within a little while!" He raiseth trophies and triumphs to the greatness of his power, from all the wrath of man that goes forth. And that which shall not belong to his praise, all that he will restrain. He can let it go forth as he pleaseth, and restrain the remainder thereof as he pleaseth. What he lets go forth, creates to himself a name upon its going forth, and he suppresseth the rest. And though I might thus multiply instances, I shall add but this one more: and that is,

[10.] The power he shows in forbearing and sparing a sinful world, and (upon his own prescribed terms) here and there, as he pleaseth, pardoning and forgiving particular sinners. This is a power which in some respects surmounts all the rest, or an instance of power that surpasseth all other instances. In other instances, his power shows itself in mastering of a creature, or outdoing all created power, but herein he useth a certain sort of power over himself, restraining his own great wrath, omnipotent wrath, that it break not forth to consume a world, and turn it into flames, as it righteously might have done many ages ago. "Let the power of my Lord be great according as thou hast said. The Lord is gracious and merciful, and of great forbearance, forgiving iniquities, transgression, and sin." Let the power of my Lord be great. O! how great is his power over this world! But how much greater is his power over himself, when he withholds his anger, and lets not his fury go forth to consume and make an end of sinners, as he easily could in a moment. But,

(2.) I shall in the next place, after these instances, give you some properties of this divine power. It is,

[1.] Original, as must be said of all divine attributes. All other power is derived, secondary, borrowed, participated from another; but the divine power God is beholden to none for; it is self-sprung, self-original. "This have I heard," saith the Psalmist, "once and again, that power belongeth unto God." It is in him, as in its native subject. His is the first power, the very beginning of power. It is in him as in the root and fountain: and so he is of himself, the mighty One. "If we speak of strength, he is strong," Job ix. 19. As if it had been said, All other strength is not worth the speaking of. If we speak of strength, meaning a strength fit to be spoken of, or mentioned under that name, that is divine strength. The divine is self-originate, it is in him as in its first original. And again,

[2.] It is irresistible, or invincible, not to be resisted if he pleaseth, and not to be overcome however. He will work and none shall let it. His work shall go on, of whatsoever kind it be; if he have designed it once, resolved it once, it shall be done through all, whatsoever opposition. Saith that man of God, Moses, that great man, (Deut. xxxii. 3. designing there to give an account of God,) "Because I will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe ye greatness unto our God: He is the rock, his work is perfect." It is spoken concerning him and his work as a stated, settled character, that whatsoever work he resolves upon, he will make thorough work of it; and so his work shall bear the heavenly image upon it. Your heavenly Father is perfect, and his work is perfect, carried on irresistibly, whatsoever it is upon which he sets his great heart, against all opposition. And again,

[3.] It is a self-moderating power; a power that can moderate itself. Indeed, the power of all intelligent beings is more or less so. It belongs only to brute agents to act, *ad ultimum*. Intelligent ones can govern their own power. But such is the divine power in perfection, a self-governing power, that doth not go forth *ad ultimum*. He can temper it as he pleaseth, and there is a most observable indication of the peculiar excellency of his power in this respect continually, though men observe it not, though men take no notice of it, that it is self-moderating; as was said before, there could be no such thing as motion any where throughout this great creation of God, but through a motive power from him, even his own motive power, he being the first mover; no hand turns, no creature moves, but by a participation of a power from him, the great Fountain of all power. But now supposing without the creation, apart from the creation, so vast a power (as the divine appears to be) to go forth, without moderation, without restraint, if once there were such a consistent thing, and this world, by any means formed and connected together, I say by any means formed and connected together, that divine power, not self-moderated power, must needs shatter this consistent world all in pieces in a moment. If that power were not self-moderated, so that things are guided and moved in a steady, orderly course, it must be so. How easily doth a great wind throw down a house! Then so vast a power going forth from the Creator of this world, supposing it compacted, congested, brought to a consistent thing already, must needs shatter it all in pieces if that power were not self-moderated that goes forth upon it. And again,

[4.] An infinite power; that is a further property of it. How often is the great God, our God, our heavenly Father, celebrated as the Almighty. "I know that thou canst do all things," saith humbled, convinced Job, when God puzzled him with so often repeated, "Canst thou? canst thou do this? and canst thou do that thou seest done? and where wast thou when I did so and so? when I laid the foundations of the earth? where wast thou when the morning stars sang together? who ever thought of thee in that age?" When God had thus argued with him and brought him down to the dust, (chap. xlii.) he saith, "I know thou canst do all things and that no thought can be withheld from thee." That is, "Whatsoever thou thinkest to do, nothing can withhold thy thought from proceeding to execution, from coming into fact, if thou wilt do it. Thou hast an unbounded power without limits." But this must be duly understood. It is to be noted here,

First, Concerning the infiniteness of the divine power, its omnipotency, its almightiness, that it can never exemplify itself by an infinite effect. As it doth not follow, because divine power is infinite therefore the world created by that power is or could be infinite; or, that it was possible for God to make an infinite one; you would think that strange perhaps. Cannot an infinite power produce an infinite effect? Can it produce an effect contrary to itself? No, but yet the other is impossible; and the reason is so plain, that I think when you consider it, every one will understand it. That is, if you should suppose the infinite power of God to have made an infinite effect, this infinite effect can be made no better, no greater than it is; for nothing can be added to what is infinite; and if so, then that infinite power could do nothing more. So that it is a contradiction for an infinite cause to produce an infinite effect, for an infinite cause would be exhausted by producing an infinite effect; but an infinite cause can never be exhausted, therefore an infinite effect can never be produced by it. That is, it can never be said concerning an infinite cause, that it can do no more. But if it should have produced an infinite effect it could do no more, for nothing can be added to what is infinite. And,

Secondly, This is to be further noted, that this infinite power, omnipotence, almightiness, it cannot do impossible things, neither things naturally impossible, nor things morally impossible.

i. Not things naturally impossible. It can give being to nothing that carries self-repugnance in it, that should imply a contradiction if such a thing should be. Whatsoever implies a contradiction is no object of omnipotency. As for instance, to make that not to be; that is, while it is to make a thing to be and not to be at the same time; or to make a thing that hath been not to have been. This implies a contradiction, this is naturally impossible, and so, by consequence, is not an object of almightiness. And,

ii. Any thing that carries in it a moral impossibility is no object of divine power. To do an unjust thing, to lie, is impossible with God, impossible to his nature; and therefore, when we speak of the infiniteness of divine power, the perfection, the absolute perfection of it, we are to consider this as it is conjoined with other divine perfections, and so we are not to measure our notion or conception of the divine power by what it, abstractedly considered, can do, but as it is the power of a being in all other respects absolutely perfect. It is one thing therefore to inquire and determine what almighty power, considered apart by itself, can do, and another thing to consider what

almighty power in conjunction with all other divine perfections can do, as it is in conjunction with holiness, justice, mercy, and wisdom. And it can never work but as it is in conjunction with these, as it is joined with all these together. Though God be almighty, omnipotent, he cannot do any unjust thing, an inept thing, a foolish thing. This were impotency, not omnipotency. It would speak him impotent, not omnipotent: it were an imperfection of power, not a perfection of it. We must consider him as perfect in power, and it would be an imperfection of power to suppose him enabled to do any thing that were unfit to be done. And then,

[5.] In the last place, his is eternal power. His eternal power and Godhead go together, "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." A perpetual, never-failing spring he is in this, as he is in all the attributes and excellencies of his being: "I am that I Am. What I am, I am without variableness, or without shadow of turning." That continual expense of power that hath been ever since the creation first arose out of nothing, hath not made that power suffer any diminution, nor can it suffer any. He is still the same, without variableness, without mutation, without so much as the shadow of a turn, of a decay, of any failure.

Let us make some *Use* of this.

1. Labour deeply to apprehend this perfection of the Divine Being: fix the apprehension of it: let all our hearts say within us, "Lord, we subscribe, we agree, we yield to the light and evidence of divine truth concerning thy Divine power." It is a lamentable case that the clearest notion of divine truth should be with us, as if we held the quite contrary, so as that with reference to effects, and impressions upon our spirits, it were all one to us, to believe that God were omnipotent, and had all power, infinite power, and to believe he had no power. It is a reproach to us, that our notions of truth, when they are never so plain, are so insignificant, so void of effect, and of their proper correspondent impression upon us.

2. Take heed of admitting disputations against the divine power. Let the foundation be once firmly laid with you, that power belongs to him in its highest perfection; and then admit no disputations against it. We are too prone to do so, to misimpute things, to impute things wrong that we take notice of, and that come under our observation, and make that a cause which is not a cause; we think that things do go in this world many times very irregularly, and so as we wish they might not, or they did not do, and secret atheism unobservedly slides in and insinuates itself. "If there be a perfect One, perfect in power as he is in all his other attributes, why are things thus? why do they go thus? why is not what is amiss redressed, and presently redressed?" But, as was said before, we are not to judge of what the Divine power *can* do, but to consider it in conjunction with other attributes: consider it in conjunction with perfect wisdom, as we shall have occasion afterwards to speak; consider it in conjunction with perfect liberty and absolute sovereignty. If we did consider things thus, "We are not to imagine that the divine power is to be exerted according to our will, but according to his will," dispute would cease, the matter would drop; we should presently say, "I yield the cause, he knows better how to use his own power than I can direct him." "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, and who, being his counsellor, hath instructed him?" and,

3. That it may be so, let us labour to get our spirits into an adoring frame and disposition towards him under this notion, as our heavenly Father, who is perfect in power, as the perfection of power is in him. Let him be always great and admirable in our eyes under that notion, and so consider. And further,

4. Let us glory in him upon that account: let our hearts exult in the thoughts that our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect. Walk accordingly in his name, glory in it, make your boast of him all the day long. This hath been the temper and genius that hath governed among a people dedicated to him heretofore. "Our God is in heaven, and he hath done whatsoever pleased him." When all people are bent to walk each one in the name of his god, why should not we walk in the name of the Lord our God? Their gods that are no gods, they please themselves with and take a kind of pride in owning them. O how warrantable a matter of gloriation have we, to go with hearts lifted up in the name of our God! Our God is in the heavens, and doth whatsoever pleaseth him; and can with the greatest facility carry every cause that he is engaged in. He cannot fail finally to own and right all that are brought to him, and adhere to him, whatsoever their present excuses for awhile may be. Learn hence again,

5. To value an interest in him, and covet it, and labour to make it sure and clear. Who can but think it the most desirable thing in all the world, to have him who is so infinitely perfect in this, as in all other respects, for their God? How secure would it make a man's heart, how quiet, and rationally quiet, to think, that power, all power, is in the hands of my Father! My Father can do whatsoever he will, he hath all power in his hand. And then,

6. When you have made it your business to secure an interest in him upon this account, and under this notion, then trust in him under the same notion. Exercise a daily, vital trust upon him. "Trust in the Lord for ever, for with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength," Isa. xxvi. 4. See how things correspond there, "Trust in the Lord:" "Why," might the soul say, "I have need of a God, and a strong one to trust in." In the Lord Jehovah is strength; trust in him. "But I have need of strength for *ever*, being made to live for ever." In him is *everlasting* strength; so that you have as much reason to trust in him to-day as you had yesterday, and will have to-morrow as you had to-day: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, strength that will never fail; and it is trust that must keep you from falling. "He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength;" and "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," Isa. xl. 29, 31. And,

7. Lastly, Dread to have him for an enemy. O! consider the fearful case of such as are engaged in a contest with him! Consider their folly, their madness, their misery, and labour to keep at the remotest distance from their state: fly from that sort of men as a dreadful spectacle; you fly from among them by ceasing to be of them. That is, by seeking reconciliation with God, and an interest in him, and striking a covenant with him, then you are delivered from being of them; but think in the mean while with pity and compassion, what mad creatures they are, that are engaged in a contest against omnipotency. "Wo to him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth." But what! shall a potsherd of the earth strive with all the powers of heaven? How unequal a match, how mad a choice is this! And from thence takes your measure of what is like to become of all the contestations in this world against God, and against his interest. We are not prescribe to him concerning the times and seasons and methods: but do you see a sort, a generation of men set against God and godliness? it is easy to judge the event; you may easily foresee the effects in the power of their productive cause.'

And thus I have gone through those attributes which we call his natural perfections.

LECTURE XXI.*

Secondly, I shall now come to speak of those perfections of God that are to be considered under the head of *intellectual* ones, and there we have these two to consider and speak of, as more eminent perfections, the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, and his WISDOM. These are great perfections of the Divine Mind, wherein we must understand our heavenly Father to be perfect, as the text styles him. I shall speak to these both together, they being congenerous, and of one sort and kind, though they are to be conceived of by us with some distinction. And,

1. For HIS KNOWLEDGE: our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect; or his knowledge is most perfect

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knowledge, it appears to be so, both in respect of the peculiar nature of it, and respect of its extent, with reference to the objects about which it is conversant.

(1.) In respect to the peculiarity of its nature; it is knowledge of such a kind as is appropriate to God only; that is, upon this account principally, that it is entirely intuitive, nor discursive. It is not such a sort of knowledge as that by which we proceed, as we do from the knowledge of plainer and more obvious things to the knowledge of those that are darker and more obscure. But his knowledge of all he knows is simultaneous, that is, he knows all things at once, all at one view. We come to know some things by the knowledge of others which we foreknew, and so are fain to lead on our minds from step to step, and from point to point. The case is not so with him. All things are at once naked and manifest to his view, so as that, though he doth see the connexion of things, and knows them to be connected, yet he doth not know them or any of them because they are so connected; that is, because he knows such things, therefore knows such other things as are connected therewith, as it is with us, while we proceed by rotation from the knowledge of some things to the knowledge of more. His is in this respect most perfect knowledge. And,

(2.) It is so in respect of its extent, in reference to the objects known. And we must,

[1.] Suppose the extent of this knowledge so vast as to reach simply unto all things; that is, not only all things that do exist, but all things that are even possible to do so. In this respect, with reference to the objects of divine knowledge, it is aptly wont to be distinguished into that which they call *Simplicis intelligentia et puræ visionis.* It is no matter for opening to you those terms; but the thing intended to be signified by the one and the other is briefly this—that God doth not only know all those things that shall certainly be, but all those things that are possible to be. And so in that respect the object of his knowledge is equal to his power. There is nothing possible but what he can do, but what he can effect. Every thing is possible to him because he can make it to be. And so vast as that *ambitus, circle* of his omnipotence, so vast also is the object of his knowledge or omniscience; that is, he knows whatsoever he can do, he knows the utmost extent of his own power, though he never intends to do actually all he can. But then,

[2.] The perfection of this knowledge, in reference to the object of it, is most especially conspicuous in two things, namely,—that he knows all futurities, and—that he knows all the most sacred thoughts and purposes of men, or generally, of his intelligent creatures.

First, That he knows all contingent futurities. It is needful you should understand me right here, not only bare futurities, that is, things that shall certainly come to pass. There are many men can certainly foretell many future things; that is, natural futurities, and such as do depend upon certain and settled causes; as when it is morning, the night will come, when the sun is risen, that it will set, when the sea has ebbed, that it will flow, and the like; but contingent futurities mean quite another thing, that is, such futurities as do depend upon free causes, such as do depend upon the will and pleasure of such creatures as have a certain sort of liberty belonging to their nature. And thence comes that miracle of prophesying; that God should be able to tell so distinctly and with such certainty, for many ages yet to come, that such and such things men will do. Nor are we to think so debasingly of this knowledge of God, as to suppose it depends only upon this his purpose to make a man do whatsoever he knows he will do; which indeed were to debase it into the very dirt, and to make him accessary to all the impurities and wickedness in the creation, by men or devils. And it is to narrow it as much as to debase it; that is, to suppose that he could not know that men would do so and so unless he would make them do the very things that he forbids them, in the very circumstances wherein he forbids them. And this indeed were to subvert the whole entire notion of divine forbearance and permissive providence. As when we are told, (Rom. iii. 25.) "That God set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." To suppose that sin should be past, through the forbearance of God, that is, that he forbearing men, they sin, were a subverting the notion of forbearance, if he made them do (by a positive effective influence) all that they do in a way of sin, though the thing be never so apparently evil in itself, most intrinsically evil, as the very act of hating himself. To suppose that he should only so know this or that, that he should be ignorant who should hate him and who should not, among the children of men, unless he should make them hate him, and determine to make them do so that he might know what they would do; this were not only to debase, but infinitely to narrow, this knowledge of God. To suppose that he cannot know but upon such and such terms, or in the same way wherein the devil hath some certain foreknowledge of what he intends to his uttermost to make men do, must infinitely debase and narrow his knowledge. He is not an idle or unconcerned supervisor of the affairs of this world, and doth not only foreknow whatsoever one will do, but he knows too how to limit their actions, and how to restrain, and how to convert and turn to good, what they do with the most evil and mischievous intentions and designs, but upon this it is that he doth demonstrate his Godhead, that he is able to declare future things long before they come to pass, and did so; that he hath given such predictions of what should be, long before it was. In many places of the prophet Isaiah he doth, as it were, magnify his own Deity in opposition to the paganish gods, by this, that he hath declared the end from the beginning, even what shall be in all aftertimes. As in the 41st, 44th, and 48th, chapters of that prophecy we have many passages of that import. And in that 41st chapter, verse 22, 23. he doth (as it were) provoke and challenge the heathen deities to demonstrate their godhead this way. "Produce your cause," (saith he,) "let them declare things to come, that we may know that they are gods;" as if he had said, "Let them never talk of being gods, or that there is any such thing as deity belonging to such despicable idols, unless they can foretell things to come." And this is the true import of that great Scripture, Rev. xix. 10. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;" that is, that which should demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion, or prove against all contradiction that Jesus was the Christ, was the spirit of prophecy so long before, that he should come at such a time and in such circumstances into the world as eventually he did. And,

Secondly, This perfection of divine knowledge is most eminently conspicuous in this too, his knowledge of the hearts of men; that he knows the most secret thoughts and purposes of men's hearts, and looks into them with an eye that injects fiery beams. He hath an eye as a flame of fire, that searcheth hearts and tries reins; so as that when there is (as it were) a challenge given to all this world, "Who can know the heart of man?" It "is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9.) here comes one, that answers the challenge, "I the Lord search the heart and try the reins." And this is one of the great things that both demonstrates and magnifies his Godhead. Amos iv. 13. "He that formed the mountains and created the wind, and that declares to man what is his thought, the Lord, the God of hosts is his name."

I shall not further insist on this, but pass on to the other intellectual perfection, in respect whereof we also ought to conceive our heavenly Father is perfect; that is,

2. His WISDOM. He is perfect in being perfectly wise, all-wise as well as all-knowing. I told you we were to speak of these perfections of the Divine nature, and conceive of them, according to what analogy they have to such things as go under the same names with us; and so wisdom and knowledge are two distinct things. Many know much who are not wise: but so we are to conceive of the perfections of our heavenly Father, that he is not only most perfectly knowing, but most perfectly wise also. Wisdom, you know, is commonly distinguished into speculative and practical; sapience and prudence. Indeed, the former doth not greatly differ from knowledge, but somewhat it doth. It is not needful for me to stay to explain to you the distinct notions of intelligence, sapience and science. The first whereof is the knowledge of principles, the last of conclusions, and the middle comprehends both together.

But besides what hath been said concerning the knowledge of God, it will be of more concernment to us to onsider his wisdom, as it corresponds to that which with ien is called prudence, as the expression is Prov. viii. 12. or both are most conjunct with them. "I wisdom dwell vith prudence." And so this wisdom lies in always proposing to himself the best and most valuable end; and hoosing the aptest and most suitable measures and means or computing it. According as any one doth more perfectly both these, he ought to be accounted more perfectly vise. Now his end is known to every one that knows any iing of God, he cannot but be his own end. As he is the iuthor so he must be the End of all things for himself. Ie hath made all things for himself, by the clearest and iost indisputable right. There could never have been any iing but by him, and it is not to be supposed that he hould make a creature to be his own end. It would not onsist with the wisdom of a God, that he should do so: were indeed to make a creature to be a god to itself, or iat he should upon such terms make a creature to ungod imself. And whereas, the just display of his own glory the means to his end, his doing that, is most conspicuous such things as these, to wit, in the creation of the world, his providential government of his creatures, in the iighty work of redemption, wherein he hath abounded in ll wisdom and prudence; and in the conduct of his reeemed through all the difficulties of time to their eternal iate.

These are the means; or his actual displaying or difusing of the beams of his glory in all these ways, is that y which he doth effect his own glory, make it to shine, as iat he is thereupon the most worthy and becoming Object nto all eternity, of all the adoration and praise of his inelligent creatures; the most worthy and deserving Object, whatsoever is done, or not done by any of them. My imits will not allow me to insist, at least not largely, on hese things.

(1.) The creation of the world. What a display of wisom was there in that! If we take but the two great and omprehensive parts of it, heaven and earth, "He hath stablished the earth by his wisdom, and stretched out the eavens by his understanding," or discretion, Jer. x. 12. And if you should look into the one or the other of these iore comprehensive parts, it would not be conviction nly, but transport and admiration, that we ought to be put nto every hour, or as often as we make any such reflecion. But I must not go into particulars, as I might. And hen,

(2.) For the providence by which he governs this created vorld, and all the variety of creatures in it, so as that all hings in their own particular places and stations do most irectly subserve the purposes for which they were visibly nade; they are sustained that they may do so; they are uided, and governed, and ordered in all their natural tendncies and motions, that they may do so. And,

(3.) For what wonderful work of redemption, the apostle ives us this note about it, that he hath therein abounded n all wisdom and prudence, Ephes. i. 7, 8. Herein did he perfection of wisdom and prudence shine forth, to reoncile the mighty, amazing difficulties, and seeming conrarieties, real contrarieties indeed, if he had not some way ntervened to order the course of things, such as the conlict between justice and mercy; that the one must be atisfied in such a way as the other might be gratified; which could never have had its pleasing, grateful exercise without being reconciled to the former. And that this hould be brought about by such an expedient, that there hould be no complaint on the one hand nor on the other, herein hath the wisdom of a crucified Redeemer, that is, whereof the crucified Redeemer or Saviour was the effected Object, triumphed over all the imaginations of men, and all the contrivances, even of devils and hell itself; for hey undoubtedly were so secure upon no account as this, that they saw our Lord die. Satan filled the heart of Judas to bring it about that he might die; animated the whole design: this was the devil's contrivance, "If he that is turning the world upside down, doing such wonders every where, all men running after him, be but dead, if we can bring him to his end, we shall certainly make an end of his religion, we shall certainly make an end of his design." But even by that death of his, by which the devil contrived the last defeat, the complete destruction of the whole design of his coming into the world, even by that very means it is brought about so as to fill hell with horror, and heaven and earth with wonder. And then,

(4.) The conduct of the redeemed through this world, notwithstanding all the obstacles, discouragements, and difficulties that lie in their way, what a display, a glorious display of the Divine wisdom is there in this! I shall not speak to particulars distinctly, but only give some general account. As,

[1.] That it hath never yet made any wrong step; that amidst all these wonderful varieties of actings and dispensations wherein it hath been engaged ever since there was a creation, there should never be any one wrong step made, nothing amiss done, nothing ever done out of time, or otherwise than it should. And,

[2.] That it is never at a stand, never puzzled, hath always its way open to it, every thing forelaid: "Known to God are all his works from the beginning," as that sage speech is of the apostle James, at the famous council of Jerusalem, Acts xv. He can never meet with a difficulty that can put him to a stand; for his way is always plain and open before him. And,

[3.] That he never loses his design, never misseth any end that he proposes to himself: The counsel of the Lord always stands, and the thoughts of his heart take place through all generations, Psalm xxxiii. 11. And,

[4.] That he doth so frequently disappoint and bring to nothing the designs of the wisest and most contriving men, turns their wiles upon their own heads, "takes the wise in their own craftiness," drives their way headlong, precipitates their counsels into confusion and abortion: as the expressions are in that 5th Job, 12, 13. and in the 33rd Psalm, 9, 10. And many more we have in Scripture, of the like import. And then,

[5.] That he frequently surpriseth the most apprehensive and sagacious among men; doth things that it was never thought he would do; wondrous things, terrible things that we looked not for, Isaiah lxiv. 3. Sometimes they are fearful surprises that he brings upon men, and sometimes grateful ones. Indeed, the same dispensation may be at the same time most terrible and most grateful, most terrible to one sort and most grateful to another, as they must be understood to be that are mentioned in Isaiah lxiv. 3. "Terrible things that we looked not for, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." That is, the most mountainous oppositions, the loftiest and most aspiring spirits brought down and made to stoop, and all their pride laid in the dust: so it hath often been beyond all expectation, he still showing his ways to be as much above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, as the heaven is high above the earth, and as the east is far removed from the west. So it hath been when he hath gone beyond any fear or foresight of his enemies, and above all the hopes and desires and prayers of his people, done beyond what they could ask or think. What wonderful conspicuous beamings forth of the divine wisdom have there been in such ways as these!

I shall not discourse to you further doctrinally concerning these things. Something I would say by way of *Use*, before I pass from them. Thus our heavenly Father is perfect. Why these are very clear notices of God, which we soon hear; we have heard them now within the compass of a little time; and we as soon assent to them as we hear them. But pray let us look into ourselves and consider, what impression have they hitherto made upon our hearts? Have our hearts been all this while leaping and springing within us, and saying, "This God is our God; our heavenly Father is thus perfect?" Hath that been the lively sense of our souls within us all this while? And consider, these notices of God are not new to us. Did we never hear before that the living and true God is all-knowing and all-wise? When were we without these apprehensions? Such a conception of God as this we have had ever since we had the use of our understanding, and heard or knew any thing of God at all. But pray consider, What suitable, permanent, and abiding impression have we borne about the world with us hitherto? and what is he so far manifested and made known to us for? Is it not that

our spirits might be formed by the discovery, and our minds thereby governed agreeably thereunto? How comes it to pass that such things as these should have had all this while no more influence to beget a correspondent heart and spirit in us towards God? Is it that these things are of little weight, that they sink no more into our hearts and souls? Or is it a matter of small concernment to us, what a one he is whom we take for our God, or profess to have so taken? Is that a matter of small concernment to us? Do we know what the name of God imports? To be a God to us, is to be our "All in all," to be such a one to us every way, in point of good to be enjoyed, in point of power and authority to be obeyed and submitted to. Can it be a little matter in our eyes, what a one our God is, he that we have to do with continually as our God? And by how much the more easily we assent to such things concerning him when we hear them, it argues that they are so much the plainer, and therefore that the guilt must be unspeakably the greater and unspeakably the heavier, if our hearts and spirits be not in some measure proportionably framed and steered and conducted according to the import and tendency of so plain things. These are not dark things that need much explication to us, nor doubtful things that need proof or demonstration. We are satisfied already, that he could not be God, who is not infinitely knowing, and infinitely wise, and perfectly both. So that we have nothing at all to do but to comport in the frame and temper of our spirits, and in the course of our walking, with these most evident things. And by how much the greater they are, and the more sacred they are, (and things that we profess to believe and apprehend concerning God must be such, for a greater one cannot be concerned than he,) the greater profaneness must it be to abuse such notices as these are, or not to use them, not to improve them to their proper purpose and end. We know such things concerning God; and have we nothing to do with the things of God, but to trifle with them, or to let them lie by as neglected, useless things, when they are to run through our lives, and to have a continual influence upon us through our whole course from day to day? Are these things right in our minds and understandings, and our hearts in the mean time only as a *rasa tabula, a mere blank?* There are such notices in our minds, but look into our hearts and see what corresponds there. Alas! there is nothing, a mere vacuity: what a sad case is this! and yet the discovery of these things breathes no other design but only to form our hearts and spirits, and that our lives may be proportionably governed. It is a dreadful thing to have the knowledge of God lie dead in our souls, as if that were to go for nothing. Here I might show you what impressions this discovery of the divine perfections should make upon our hearts, and might thence proceed to show you in many instances that it doth not make that impression which it should. But I must not take that course. I will briefly hint a little at the former, the latter you will recollect yourselves: *rectum est index sui et obliqui:* If it doth appear once what we should be and do, correspondently to the apprehension of the divine perfection in these respects, it will be easy to us to animadvert on ourselves, and see wherein we are not what we should be, and do not what we should do correspondently hereunto. It is plain,

1. That such a discovery of God, in these perfections of his, should conduce greatly to the forming and composing of our spirits to adoration, to make adoration of him to be very much the business of our lives. How grateful should it be to us to think we have such an Object for worship and adoration, the all-knowing and the all-wise God! How vastly different in this respect is our case from theirs that worship stocks and stones for deities, senseless and inanimate things! that worship woods and trees, and rivers and fountains, and beasts and creeping things, and the like! What hath God done for us that he hath made himself known to us in these great perfections, as the Object of our worship! that when we pray we know we pray to an intelligent Being, that knows all things, and an all-wise God, that judgeth what is best and most suitable to be done in reference to what we supplicate him about, and when and how to do all that he judgeth fit to be done. There ought not only to be an adoring frame in solemn worship hereupon, but an adoring frame we should carry about with us through this world, often looking up to him, and considering that we have always an eye to meet our eye, and are to apply mind to mind, (what a satisfaction is that!) understanding to understanding, our imperfect understanding to his perfect one. With what adoring souls should we go through this world every day upon this account! But do we do so? Consider how far short we come in so plain a case as this is. And again,

2. Should it not make us stand much in awe? The matter is plain: great knowledge and wisdom in a man, great prudence, creates great reverence, especially if it be in conjunction with things that we know are in the highest conjunction here, if in conjunction with authority, power, and dignity. But even apart they do much in this kind; when a man hath the repute of a wise man, of a knowing person, it would strike us with so much awe as not to trifle, not to play the fool in the presence of such a one. Is there any thing proportionable with us in our frame and deportment towards the all-knowing God? Our heavenly Father is perfectly knowing, perfectly wise; in what awe should we stand of him continually upon these accounts! And again,

3. It should fill us with shame to think what he knows by us. He is all eye, as one said truly of him. With what confusion should it fill us to think he should know so much by us every day! Every vain thought, every light motion of our mind, all our fooleries, all our triflings, all our impurities that lodge and lurk in our hearts, are known to him. This thought made a great impression upon a heathen, (Seneca, as he testifieth himself,) *Omnia sec ago, tanquam in conspectu, I do every thing as in sight*, as having an eye that doth *rimari, pry* into my breast. O! what a shame is it that we should need a heathen instructor in such a matter as this! and how confounded should we be before the Lord to think what he knows by us continually, that we should be ashamed that men should know such things concerning us, as we are not ashamed he should know. The ingenuity of grace is wanting, it works not, shows not itself. It hath wrought like itself heretofore, "I blush, I am ashamed to lift up mine eyes to heaven," saith good Ezra, and that, when he speaks not so much neither concerning his own sins as the sins of the people.

4. How should it make us study to be sincere. Nothing in us so answers perfect wisdom and knowledge in God, as sincerity. Every thought of my heart thou hast known long before; and it follows in the same Psalm, cxxxix. "Search me, O Lord, and try me, and show me if there be any evil way" (any painful way, as the Hebrew admits to be read) "in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Again,

5. It should possess us with great complacency, (those that can reflect upon their own sincerity,) that they are continually in view to God. It should be a complacential thought, to think that he who is so perfectly knowing, and so perfectly wise, knows their sincerity, and knows, too, all their infirmities. That he knows their sincerity, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," John xxi. 17. And that he knows their infirmities, and will consider them with indulgence and compassion. "He knows our frame and remembers that we are but dust." Psal. ciii. 14. And,

6. It ought to possess us with trust, habitual trust, that should run through our lives. Is not such a one fit to be trusted? doth it not highly recommend him to us as the Object of our trust, that we know him to be perfectly knowing and perfectly wise? You can easily apprehend an ignorant fool is not to be trusted. One that is ignorant and a fool is no fit object of trust. Is not he therefore that is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise, a fit Object? How cheerfully therefore should you trust him with all your concernments, how cheerfully should you intrust him with the concerns of this world, and your part and share therein! considering in what hand your affairs and all affairs do lie, even in his who will make "all things work together for good." So he hath engaged to do, and he is most knowing and most wise that hath so engaged. Imprudent persons promise rashly what is not in their power, but he that is perfectly knowing and wise can never do so. Though I might mention divers other things I will shut up all with this,

7. It should make us study conformity to him in these respects. Have we this discovery of the perfections of our heavenly Father, that he is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise? It should make us endeavour after conformity to him in knowledge and wisdom; for these are some of his communicable excellencies, that is, his imitable ones. We should think with ourselves, "Is it for me to pretend to him as a child, to call him Father, to say, my Father which is in heaven is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise, when I am nothing else but an ignorant fool?" Wisdom expects to be justified of her children. Are we the children of wisdom, are we the children of him that is perfectly wise and perfectly knowing? Certainly it concerns us to be like our Father in these respects; this is a great part of his image, even of his image to be renewed in us. "Put on (saith the apostle) the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10. Is it for the glory of the all-wise and all-knowing God to have a company of fools for his children, ignorant creatures that know nothing, and labour not to know much, of the things that most concerns them to know, in reference to him, and what lies between him and them? We should, upon these accounts, labour to value and covet, most of all, mental excellencies such as these. But such is not the common guise of this world. And it is an amazing thing, to think so many intelligent creatures' minds and spirits (though lodged in flesh) should be so lost as to all apprehension of true excellency, or of what is truly valuable, as to value a little glitter, a little exterior pomp and splendour, before these mental excellencies of knowledge and wisdom, that are most peculiar to God, and wherein we, if we are possessed of them, shall most resemble him. What fools are the men of this world! They esteem men according as they have most of worldly pelf, as they have collected together most of thick clay, but they never think of valuing themselves or any one else by the mental excellencies of knowledge and wisdom in which they resemble God. What base erroneous thoughts must these be supposed to have of God! What do such make of God? As the apostle speaks to these Athenians, but speaks as knowing and understanding them and himself to be of a mind as to this, he argues with them from a principle, and *ex concessis*, "What! do you think the Godhead is like silver and gold, or corruptible things?" As if he had said, "I cannot but know as well as if I were within you, that you are of my mind perfectly in this matter, that I, that the Godhead is not like to silver or gold or corruptible things; but he is a Spirit, and you, as you are spiritual beings, or as you have such in you, are his offspring." Certainly it is to be governed by the judgment of a fool in my choice, in my desires, in my estimation of things, to think that earthly things are the most valuable things, that eternal things (as the apostle calls them) are the most honourable things. No, without doubt those are the most honourable and most valuable things that are most God-like, and by which I shall most resemble God. How was he taken with Solomon for his judgment and choice when he bids him ask what he would have! He was not such a fool as to go and ask riches, honour, long life, or the necks of his enemies, but begs for wisdom and understanding. This was most God-like; and you see how God was pleased with his choice, how high an approbation he gives of it in that 1 Kings iii. 10, 11. And we should labour to govern our own judgment in these matters accordingly.

And pray consider this with yourselves, and labour to feel the weight of it in your own spirits, if we do not covet and desire that God should create us according to his image and likeness, we shall certainly be apt to create to ourselves a god after our own image and likeness. That is, if we do not make it our business to have ourselves made like unto him, we shall be industrious to make him like to ourselves. As it is in the Psalmist, "Thou thought-est that I was altogether such a one as thyself." A thing that will lead and plunge us into the deplorable estate of all sin and misery unavoidably.

* Preached October 16th, 1691.

LECTURE XXII.*

Thirdly, It remains now that we go on to the third head of the communicable perfections of God, to wit, those of the Divine will, or which we may otherwise call his *moral perfections*; and the most principal of them which I shall (but briefly too) speak of, are these four, to wit, his holiness, his justice, his faithfulness, and his goodness. And before I speak to them severally, I shall give you some general considerations concerning them, and which will also partly respect some of those that have been spoken to already under the former heads. As,

1. That when we distinguish the divine perfections into natural, intellectual, and moral, the meaning is not as if those that were intellectual and moral were not also natural. But the first member in this distinction is larger and more comprehensive than the rest. All that are intellectual and moral are also natural perfections in the Divine nature, but all that are natural are not intellectual and moral. And,

2. We are to consider this concerning them, that the divine perfections which are spoken of under the notion of attributes, they do suppose their subject to be such, as to which they can and they must agree: we speak now only of a subject of denomination, not of a subject of inhæsion in a proper sense. But they do all suppose their subject, that is, of predication, to be a spiritual Being, or they do suppose God to be a Spirit, and might, all of them, be brought as proofs and demonstrations (if it were needful) that he is so. He could not be intelligent if he were not a Spirit, nor righteous, nor holy, nor just, nor true, for all these do suppose such a subject of predication as to which such attributes or attributed perfections can and must agree. And therefore (as hath been intimated formerly) when we speak of the attributes and perfections of God, this doth not come among them, but is pre-supposed, and necessarily pre-supposed. Those that are properly called attributes are spoken of in *quale quid*, not in *quid*, as schoolmen do fitly enough say, though I do not need to trouble you with the explication of those terms.

3. You are to note this concerning them, that as they do suppose their suitable subject, so several of them do suppose others of them. As wisdom doth suppose knowledge, and holiness doth suppose wisdom; and justice, holiness, and faithfulness, justice, and so on. And again,

4. We are to consider that our conception of God and his nature, and the properties belonging thereunto, cannot possibly take up things otherwise than by parts; and so all our conceptions of him must be inadequate, and when we have taken up as much as is possible, it is but a small portion that we have taken up, or can admit into our minds. And therefore, we are to conceive concerning all these perfections of God, that though it be unavoidable to us to apprehend diversely, yet we must apprehend them as all falling into one most simple nature and being; whence it is not to be thought strange that we find a coincidence in very great part indiversive of these perfections, that do (as it were) fall and run into one another. As there will be more occasion to take notice in those particulars that are mentioned. And,

5. You are to consider further, that our notices of God must needs be in a great measure by reflection on ourselves. He hath been pleased to let us know that he created man at first after his own image. That is, after his natural image, with the addition of his moral or holy image. And that he doth again regenerate and renew men after his own image, that is, his holy image, supposing the natural one, that being still supposed remaining, as the subject both of the corruption and of the restitution. This being so, we have the advantage of discerning much concerning the excellencies and perfections of the Divine nature by reflecting upon ourselves. What we see by that reflection, we see as in a glass darkly, and indeed, when we are the glass we are a very dark one. But some resemblance, some image there is to be found; even with all there is the natural image of God, and with the regenerate there is the holy image renewed, though very imperfectly renewed.

whereupon when we are to conceive of holiness, faithfulness, justice, and goodness in God, our conception is much to be helped by these notions that we cannot but have of such things among men, these being (as you have heard) of his communicable attributes, that have the same name in him and in men and the image and likeness of the same things. And,

6. Though there be somewhat of the divine image or likeness in men, yet this similitude is not to be considered without very great dissimilitude. It is true indeed, *omne simile est dissimile*, every like is also unlike, but there must be most of all when we are to compare things in God and in us. Though there be some similitude, the dissimilitude must be vastly great which we are to take along with us in speaking of each of those mentioned perfections of the divine will, and so we come to the particulars. And,

1. As to the HOLINESS OF GOD. That very term, as it is applied to God, is of various significancy. And indeed, it is so as the term comes thence transferred unto creatures. Sometimes it signifies august, venerable, great, majestic. And the reason of the use of that phrase to such a purpose, that is, holy, to signify august and venerable, is obvious: for as things that were holy were not to be violated, were not to be touched (as it were) by impure hands, not to be arrogated, not to be meddled with by any but those to whom they were appropriate, (in which respect, majesty hath been wont to be accounted a sacred thing that was not to be meddled with by any other, and the person a sacred person that was clothed therewith, not by any means in the world to be violated,) so, with no very remote translation, holy or holiness being spoken of God doth signify the awfulness, the venerableness, of the divine nature. But yet, this is somewhat alien from holiness as it is a moral perfection, or as it is a perfection of the divine will. And, therefore, as such we must consider it under its own proper and peculiar notion. It sometimes also signifies firm, sure, unalterable. The *sure* mercies of David, (Isa. lv.) the Septuagint renders it sacred, holy. But if we speak of holiness in the proper sense, as it is a perfection of the divine will, so it must needs, in the general notion, signify the rectitude of that will in all things, and so it must have two parts, a negative, and a positive part.

(1.) A negative; and so the divine holiness stands in purity, in being most perfectly free from any taint or defilement, from any thing of moral turpitude, in any kind or any degree. And that purity, the negative rectitude of the divine will which is carried in his holiness, comprehends two things, first, an enmity from all irrectitude, any taint, any turpitude; and secondly, an abhorrence and detestation thereof. Not only that the nature and will of God hath nothing impure, or that is not right, adhering to it; but doth also detest and abhor to have. It signifies the aversion of the divine will, its perpetual, inflexible aversion, from every thing that is evil, unworthy of it, unbecoming to it. And so, whereas holiness is spoken of in Scripture under the notion of light, that light is said to be without darkness, in the first place, (1 John i. 5.) "God is light, and with him is no darkness at all." This is made the matter of solemn message to the sons of men: "And this is the message that we have from him, and which we declare to you:" God hath sent this message to the world, this account of himself, that he is light, and without any darkness at all, without the least mixture of any thing that is impure, or foul, or unworthy of him. But then, as it is said in that place, speaking of the divine holiness under the notion of light, that it is without darkness; so it is, secondly, elsewhere, represented under the same notion as expulsive of it, declining it, hating it, as having with it a most inflexible and eternal aversion from every thing that is signified under the notion of darkness, unholiness being there signified by it. "What communion hath light with darkness?" It is drawn down to signify that there can be no communion between God and unholiness, the temple of God and idols, 2 Cor. vi. 16. And,

(2.) This holiness hath also its positive part, which must comprehend two, the like things that have been mentioned concerning the negative part. That is, first, the actual, perpetual rectitude of all his volitions, and all the works and actions that are consequent hereupon; and, secondly, an eternal propension thereunto, a love thereof, by which it is altogether impossible to that will, that it should ever vary from itself in this, as it cannot in any other respect. That the determinations of that will are right in themselves, is out of question; and that his word (and he best understands his own nature) testifies over and over. And then his propension, his eternal, unalterable propension of will to that which is right and good, that we find spoken of as a thing we must conceive too, as belonging to his holiness also; "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright," Psal. xi. 7. And so you have his hatred of all iniquity, and his love of universal rectitude, both mentioned together in one and the same breath, as it were; "Because thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity," (it is spoken of Christ, it is true, but spoken of him as God, (Psal. xlv. 7.) having said immediately before, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,") therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee." He is the image of God, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. But here it may be said, when we place (as we cannot but do) the notion of holiness generally in rectitude, every thing of rectitude must have some measure or another, or some rule to which it is to be referred, and which it is to be judged by. What is then the measure and will of divine rectitude wherein holiness stands? This is the thing that hath been very variously discussed, and with a great deal more perplexity than there was cause for. These things you may take about it, that are all plain in themselves, and will be as much as will need to be, or can, in sum and substance, be said to it. As,

First, That the divine rectitude cannot be measured by any law, that refers to him properly so taken. A law properly taken, is the signification of the will of a superior concerning an inferior. But it is out of question, God can have no superior, and so nothing can in a proper sense be a law to him. And a measure, it is prior to the thing measured, must be before it, but there can be nothing prior to God. Yet,

Secondly, In the borrowed sense, very plain it is that God is a law to himself; and it is the only conception concerning this matter that it can admit of; nor is that to be thought at all strange, when those parcels and fragments of right notion that are left in the ruined nature of man, do yet leave him a law to himself, where he hath no other law, no written law, extant before him: much more, when the notions of rectitude are most perfect, they may supply the place of a rule or measure by which the divine rectitude is to be measured. But,

Thirdly, His mere will, abstractly considered, cannot be this measure, as if the divine will might have made that which is right to be wrong, or that which is wrong to be right: this is altogether unconceivable and impossible, that that will, abstractly considered, should be to him the measure of right or wrong, or of good and evil. That is, as if one could suppose that an act of the will might alter the obligation that is upon an intelligent creature to love the best good; or could make it lawful or a duty to hate the highest and most perfect pulchritude and beauty. This cannot be: as we are told, it is impossible for God to lie. He cannot lie, as it is impossible to him to be unholy, as it is to be untrue. And, therefore, that there are eternal reasons of moral good and evil is a most indubitable thing; that that which is right could not in its own nature, in the greatest instances, but be so; and that, thereupon, that the distinction must be admitted necessarily, of things that are good because God wills them, and of things that he wills because they are good. And so natural laws and positive, they come to have their distinction and diverse consideration. And then in the last place,

Fourthly, That it is equally absurd to suppose that the ideas of right and wrong, or of moral good and evil, as they are a measure to God, should have place any where but in him; that is, in his will, not abstractly considered, but in his will as it is everlastingly conformed to a wise mind. There cannot but be an everlasting conformity between the rectitude of the divine will and the divine word. And whatsoever he doth, he doth all things, not because he will, but according to the counsel of his will, Eph. i. 11. And, indeed, the contrary apprehension were to resolve all the divine perfections into nothing but sove-

reignty. It is the divine will that is the measure of good and evil, yet not abstractly considered, but as it doth agree with most perfect wisdom, and that unalterably thereupon, it is as impossible to him ever to will that which is not wise, as it is impossible to him ever to speak that which is not true. And so far, having given some account of the divine holiness, wherein it lies, you may collect in great part from what hath been said, this double property of it, not to mention more:

i. That his holiness is primary, all other holiness is but derivative, imparted. This is the fountain holiness, the primary holiness. And,

ii. His holiness is essential. It agrees to him not primarily only, but essentially too, as being altogether inseparable from his nature. Holiness in any creature was always to it an extra-essential thing. We have had instances of it even in the higher orders of God's creatures. Man was created holy, but fell. Among the angels that were universally holy, many fell. So the holiness of the best of creatures is a thing in itself separable from its essence. But the divine holiness is most perfectly inseparable. I shall say no more upon this, (the course that I am upon did oblige me to great brevity in speaking to this head,) but only by way of *Use*.

1. To recommend it to you, that we may live in the adoration of God, considered under this notion: "Who is like thee among the gods, glorious in holiness?" Exod. xv. 11. "There is none holy as the Lord," as Hannah speaks in that admirable song of hers, 1 Sam. ii. 2. How should we rejoice in the thoughts of this, that we have such an object of worship, so perfectly, unexceptionably holy. And,

2. We ought to study the imitation of him herein, as the adoration of him upon this account, understanding the text as saying that to you, "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" in holiness: "Be ye holy, for I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. referred (for so it is written, as the apostle speaks) to that Levit. xi. 44. and in divers other places.

3. Consider with what great gratitude the condescending goodness ought to be owned, that he should have a design to make such as we like himself in this respect: we ought to acknowledge great kindness even in such a commandment, "Be ye holy, for I am holy. I would fain have you like myself." It speaks great love and good-will to us, that he would have us imitate him. And,

4. It should make us willingly submit to any methods that he thinks fit to use, to bring us to that conformity to him in this respect; that we be gradually perfected herein, as he is most perfect. The state of our case requires that his methods should be sometimes rough and severe for his purpose. We have a great deal of dross about us. The fathers of our flesh, indeed, they correct (saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 9.) "after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." A great word and work, (and which we ought to consider accordingly,) that we might be partakers of his holiness! that is, that he might transform us into his image and likeness. What difficulties, what furnaces, what fires, what deaths would we not go through for this, that we might be made partakers of his holiness, to be in this respect, as he is, perfect.

2. The next that I have mentioned of these four perfections of the divine will, is his JUSTICE. And justice is wont to be distinguished into universal and particular. But then,

(1.) As universal righteousness or justice doth comprehend particular justice in it, so it superadds somewhat distinguishing, as you shall see by and by. Therefore,

(2.) For particular justice, that is two-fold. It is either commutative or distributive: for commutative justice, with God it can have no place, because he hath no equal; or there are none of the same order with him, that can make exchanges with him, or that can transfer rights to him for any rights transferred from him; he can be debtor to none of his creatures. "Who hath given him any thing, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" as Rom. xi. 35. It is a challenge to all the world. But it is that part of particular justice, which is wont to be called distributive justice, that properly agrees to him, that is, rectoral justice, magistratical justice, the justice of a governor, ruler, of a superior towards an inferior. And that useth to be divided into these two parts, premiaitive and puniative; premiative, that confers rewards, and puniative, that dispenseth punishments. For the former of these, whatsoever rewards God dispenseth must be all of grace, not at all of debt. He cannot be antecedently a debtor to his creatures, otherwise than by promise, and so his justice runs into his faithfulness, as you will see by and by. And supposing him to have bound himself by promise, then it is a piece of justice with him to make good his promise, and thereupon, the notion of righteousness doth obtain and take place, even in conferring benefits. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love," Heb. vi. 10. And "it is a righteous thing with God," not only to "recompense tribulation" to the troublers of his people, but also, those that are troubled rest with him, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. And "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." There is a piece of justice in it. It is, upon one account, the highest act of mercy imaginable, considering with what liberty and freedom the course and method were settled, wherein sins come to be pardoned: and it is an act of justice also, inasmuch as it is the observation of a method to which he had tied himself, and from which afterwards, therefore, he cannot depart, cannot vary.

And then for punitive justice, this is most distinguishing of the justice of God, from his holiness abstractly considered. By his holiness he hates sin, and by justice he punisheth it. The one makes him hate it, the other obligeth him to animadvert upon it in a way of punishment, or inclines him to do so. And this he doth as a debtor to himself. Justice among creatures is conversant about the rights of other men; but in God it must be conversant about his own rights; because he is himself the Fountain of all rights. And there could be no such thing as right throughout the whole universe, if it had not its first fountain in God himself; and therefore his justice must be the faithful guardian of the rights of his sovereignty and government. And thereupon, this justice doth not only allow him but oblige him to award to every transgression a just recompense of reward as the Scripture speaks.

But of this I shall say no more, save only this word or two by way of *Use*; that is,

1. Let us have our souls so possessed with this apprehension of the divine justice as to dread it, and stand in great awe of it, knowing that we have to do with a God that will not be mocked or trifled with by any; and who never confers favours upon any, so as to forget his just right; nor doth so exercise his mercy towards any as to depress and lose his sovereignty; of which sovereignty of his, as hath been said, his justice must always be a faithful guardian, and therefore, those that are nearest to him must know, that if they transgress his justice must have an exercise about them, even as punitive. There is such a thing as economical, punitive, family justice, by which, even where God is pleased to be related as a Father, he animadverts upon, and chastises and punishes, the faults and follies of his own children, even those that are of his own household. Though you must distinguish of punishments, between those that are corrective and those that are vindictive. Vindictive punishments shall not have place there upon those that are, and have, a stated being in the family, that are of it and in it. But corrective punishment shall have place even there. And then,

2. Not only dread divine justice, but labour to engage it to be on your side. What a great blessing is that, to have even justice itself plead for us, and the state of our case brought to that pass that it may. If we confess our sins, that is, with a truly evangelical frame of spirit, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. But I pass on,

3. To say somewhat of his FAITHFULNESS. And that also doth in a great part run into justice, as justice doth in some part run into holiness. But so far as to superadd somewhat peculiar and distinguishing. The faithfulness of God is his veracity, or his truth as it relates to his word, the conformity that is between his word and his mind. And whereas his word, as his faithfulness that refers to it, is two-fold, assertory and promissory; so accordingly must his faithfulness be understood. It stands either in declaring to us truly how things are, or how they shall be. It relates to his *assertory* word; that is, that he doth make a

true representation to us of all things that are to be received by us as doctrines. Whereas, he is in no possibility of being deceived himself herein, so neither can he deceive us; God cannot lie. It is impossible to God to lie. So much the light of a pagan could discern of God, even Balaam; "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." All the declarations that he hath made to us by way of assertion of things that we are to conceive are so and so, we are to look upon his truth and faithfulness as engaged herein. That is, he doth make a representation to us of things just as they are, and no otherwise, in what he saith to us of himself, in what he saith to us of Christ, in what he saith to us of his Spirit, and in what he saith to us of the way and course of duty wherein we are to walk, and the like. And whereas our Lord Jesus Christ is the Revealer, the first Revealer of God and his mind to men, he is thereupon called the faithful witness, as representing and testifying things just to be as they are, and no otherwise. It comes in among his glorious titles, "Jesus Christ, the first-begotten from the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the faithful witness:" that falls in among the rest, Rev. i. 5. God's name is in him, that is, the same nature is in him whereof the divine name is expressive. And therefore, in the whole Gospel revelation we must conceive the highest faithfulness to be engaged. That which sums it up "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," the apostle calls it, "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," (1 Tim. i. 15.) most worthy to be received and believed. And then,

The word of God, to which this faithfulness hath reference, is not only assertory but *promissory;* not only declaratory how things are, but how also they shall be. It is true, we may take in his threatenings too, unto which his faithfulness hath reference as well as his promises. But chiefly and principally, his faithfulness hath reference to his covenant. "He is the faithful God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for ever," Deut. vii. 9. And "he will not alter the covenant that is gone out of his mouth, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail," Psalm lxxxix. 33, 34.

And therefore, concerning this also, take so much of present *Use.* Is God perfect in this respect, most perfectly true and faithful, true to his word, his mind always agreeing most accurately with it? Then,

1. Trust this faithfulness of his. The object of trust is faithfulness most properly, the most immediate object. That which answers to faithfulness is faith. If he be faithful, he is to be believed, trusted in, and relied upon. In that passage of the apostle's prayer that he might be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, for all men have not faith; the most probable meaning of that, is, that have not faithfulness, (faith being there taken objectively,) that are not fit to be trusted; wicked and unreasonable men, upon whom we can place no trust, that are not fit to be believed. But we are never to admit a thought so diminishing or debasing concerning him whom we have taken to be our God, as if he were not fit to be trusted, as if his faithfulness could fail any whit. Our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect; therefore trust him perfectly, without vacillation, without wavering or suspenseful hearts. He cannot deny himself, he abides most faithful, and therefore most securely to be relied upon by those that are, through his grace, enabled to give up themselves to him. He desires nomore: give up yourselves to him, and you are safe on his part: rely upon him, for he is faithful; he will keep what you commit to him. And,

2. Imitate his faithfulness as well as trust it. Do you labour to be perfect herein? I pray let us all labour to be perfect in this as our heavenly father is perfect, to wit, in faithfulness, both towards him and towards men.

(1.) Towards him. O! how can we think it tolerable to break with him who is never apt to break with us! His faithfulness can never fail; why should ours so often fail? When we promise, when we engage, when we vow to live in his love, in his fear, in his communion; what shame should it cover our faces with, to be unfaithful towards him, who is constantly faithful towards us! And,

(2.) Towards men; imitate him there too: this would be the glory of our religion. It is the intolerable reproach of it, that there is so much falsehood among men, and even among them that profess the Christian name, among them who pretend to God as their God: saying he is their God who is the faithful God, most perfectly faithful. This makes a most deplorable state of things. "Help, Lord," (saith the Psalmist,) "for the faithful man faileth," Psalm xii. 1. It makes the state of things so very dismal, that all who understand themselves think they have reason to cry to heaven, "Help, help, in such a sad case as this." Help, Lord, the godly man fails, there is no faithfulness left in the world. We are undone in this case if God do not help, if we have no help from heaven. But what an ornament is it to the Christian name and profession, when the very words of such and such as do profess it, are reckoned stable as a pillar of brass. "I would no more distrust such a man's word, than I would fear the falling of the heavens over me, or the sinking of the earth under me:" this would be the glory of our religion. O! then, let us labour to be perfect in this respect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

* Preached November 20th, 1691.

LECTURE XXIII.*

HAVING discoursed from this text, of many of the divine perfections, under the distinct heads of the perfections of the divine nature, of the divine mind, and of the divine will: and as for those of this last rank, having discoursed to you of several others, it remains to say something yet,

4. Of the DIVINE GOODNESS; where, by goodness, I do not mean the goodness of being merely, or the goodness of this or that thing in its own particular kind; nor moral goodness in the utmost extent and latitude of it, for that would comprehend the several other perfections of the divine will, that have been spoken to already: but one branch thereof only, which commonly goes under the name of benignity; a benign inclination of will, which we are to consider, both with respect of what it excludes, and in respect of what it includes.

(1.) In respect of what it excludes; it excludes what is opposite to it, whether it be contrarily opposite, or contradictory. That which is contrarily opposite is an aptness to do hurt, a mischievous disposition to have a mind or will prone to the doing of mischief; which it most certainly excludes; and then, that which is contradictorily opposite is, not to be willing to do good, an unaptness to do good.

(2.) And so, accordingly, it doth include a general propensity to benefaction, to acts of beneficence, and so we are to consider the goodness of God analogically to what we can find of any like specimen among men; for indeed much of our way of knowing God is by reflection, there being somewhat of God yet left and remaining in man, fragments, broken relics of that image first instamped upon the soul of man in his creation. And by them it is, that we form the general notion, even of those perfections which we do ascribe to God. We see the several features of that image, by reflection, as in a glass, on which we bestow such and such names. Though in the mean time we must know, (as hath been told you upon other occasions over and over,) that whatsoever there is that goes under the same name with God and with us, (as all his communicable attributes do,) yet the things must be infinitely diverse, as his being and ours cannot but be. It is but some shadow, some faint resemblance, of the divine perfections that are discernible in us. But upon those things we bestow these names, still apprehending, that under the same name somewhat infinitely more perfect hath its place and being in God.

And now, as to this perfection, (the divine benignity,) I purposely reserved that to the last place, because it is most in the eye and design of this text, as is very manifest if you look back but to the two more immediate paragraphs, which do more directly refer hither, the former of them more expressly signifying that vacancy that should be in us, (in conformity to the divine pattern and example,) of all inclination to do evil, and the latter, positively expressing and holding forth the inclination that should be in us, after the same example to do good. Of the former of

these paragraphs you may look downwards from ver. 38, and see how the design of that runs against a mischievous temper and disposition of spirit, an aptness to do evil, yea, though provoked; that there must be no disposition to retaliate, to requite evil with evil, wrong with wrong, injury with injury; but rather than do so, suffer oneself to be injured more, as the several expressions in that paragraph do signify, which it is not needful here to consider.

And then for the latter paragraph, concerning the disposition to do good, the discourse of that runs from ver. 43. to this conclusion and close of the chapter; all under the name of love; so extensive and large in reference to its object, as not to exclude enemies themselves; those that do with the most bitter hate pursue and persecute us. "You have heard it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy;" such undue limits have been wont to be put and assigned to your love; that you acquit yourselves well enough if you do love them that love you, and if you do good turns to them that do such to you, if you carry it courteously and affably in your salutations to such as will salute you. But this is a mean and narrow spirit, unworthy of a Christian, and unworthy of the name and design of Christianity, that being intended to restore man to man, to restore man to himself, to make man what he was, and what he should be. There are no such limitations as those to be made to our love; it must reach enemies, enemies themselves. "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you;" and all this, that you may be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect; (for so he doth;) "that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust;" animadverting upon it as a mean thing, and an argument of a base and narrow spirit, to have our love and kindness confined to those wonted limits, wherein men, otherwise caught by their own corrupt inclinations, are wont to confine theirs. This is, therefore, the main and more principal design of this text, as it refers to the context, to commend to us the divine benignity, to represent that, and to set it before us as a pattern to which we are to be conformed. Be in this respect perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

And indeed, it is the fittest to consider this divine perfection in the last place; for it is (as it were) the perfecting perfection; it crowns and consummates all the rest. All the excellencies of the Divine Being, they are to be considered not abstractly, each by itself, but as they refer to one another, and as all together they do make one admirable temperament; as with reverence we may speak. Indeed, if those that are abstractly considered, that are wont to go under the notion with us of very great exercise, should be all separated from this, they lose themselves, lose their very name; wisdom, apart from goodness, it were only an ability to contrive; power, apart from goodness, were only an ability to execute ill purposes and designs. But divine wisdom, that is in conjunction with most perfect goodness; and divine power, that is in conjunction with the most perfect goodness; and so this is (as I may say) the perfecting perfection, consummating of all the rest. How admirable a thing is that wisdom that is continually prompted by goodness! and that power that is continually set on work by goodness, in all the efforts and exertions of it!

And now, in speaking to this, the divine benignity and goodness, I shall briefly point out unto you the various diversifications of it, and then lay before you some of the more observable exemplifications of it. I shall show you how it is diversified, and wherein it is exemplified.

[1.] How it is diversified. It admits, in sundry respects, which I shall mention to you,) of sundry considerations and notions that may be put upon it, which yet do all run into this one thing, goodness. First, as it imports a propension unto any thing of suitableness, according as the estimate of divine wisdom and liberty doth determine it, and so it goes under the name of love. Love, is nothing else but a propension towards this or that object. The objects towards which divine goodness is propense, they are estimated by his wisdom and liberty, or sovereignty in conjunction, in respect of their capacities to receive these his propensions, or to be the passive subjects thereof. Secondly, as it refers to offenders, guilty creatures, so this goodness is his clemency; thirdly, as it refers to repeated offences, so it is patience; fourthly, as it refers to long continued and often repeated provocations, so it is long-suffering, forbearance; fifthly, as it refers to a miserable object, so it is pity and compassion; sixthly, as it refers to an amiable object, so it is complacency and delight; seventhly, as it refers to an indigent object, and speaks large benefactions towards it, so it is bounty; and lastly, as it refers to the principle of liberty and spontaneity from whence it proceeds, so it is called grace, εὐδοκία, the very expression that is used to signify the goodness of the will, when, without any kind of inducement, good is done for goodness' sake. "Thou art good and doest good." When there is nothing to oblige, nothing to requite, nothing to remunerate, nothing to invite, this is the graciousness of goodness. These are sundry diversifications, (as they may fitly enough be called,) and one and the same excellency, divine goodness and benignity, raised according as such and such respects (as have been mentioned) do clothe it. But then,

[2.] We come to give you exemplifications of it, in instances and evidences that do recommend and show it forth unto us. And,

First, The most obvious and most comprehensive one is, this very creation itself which we behold, and whereof we ourselves are a little, inconsiderable part. What else can be supposed to have been the inducement to an infinite, self-sufficient, all-sufficient Being to make such a creation as this stand forth out of nothing, but an immense goodness, a benignity not to be prescribed unto, and was only its own reason to itself, of what it would design and do? The creation could add nothing to him; for it being produced out of nothing, it could have nothing in it, but what was of him and from him; and so there is nothing of being in it, nothing of excellency and perfection in it, but what was originally and eminently in himself before; for nothing could give that which it had not; and all that is in this world, is given out from God himself, and therefore, it is resolvable into nothing else but mere goodness, that we are, or that any thing else besides is. As in Rev. iv. 11. "For thy pleasure all things are and were created." For thy pleasure; it was a pleasure to him to have that immense and boundless goodness of his issue and flow forth in such a creation: and among the rest of creatures, in giving being to such as might be capable of knowing who made them, and of contemplating the glorious excellencies of their Maker, and of partaking a felicity in him, as well as a being from him. Indeed, that there should be so vast a creation, (though all that is nothing compared with him, vast as it is,) that is owing to his power; that there should so ornate, and amiable, and orderly a frame of things be created, that is owing to his wisdom. But that there should be any creation at all, that is owing to nothing else but his mere goodness. He would have creatures that should be capable of knowing and enjoying the excellencies and perfections that make up his being to himself, according to their measure and capacities; and he would have other creatures of inferior ranks and orders to minister unto them. And though this be an obvious thing, and we hear of it often, it is often in our minds, yet I am afraid it is not often enough in our hearts. It doth not sink and pierce deep into our souls, to think what we, by mere nature, are, by mere untainted, uncorrupt nature; all that we are by divine benignity, that it did eternally depend upon his mere pleasure whether I should be something or nothing. And what a rebuke would this carry in it to a vain mind, if it might be seriously and often thought of! "Was I created to indulge and pursue vanity, to indulge a vain mind, and pursue vain things?" How great an awe would it hold our spirits under! It would teach us to fear the Lord and his goodness, to think, "I only am, and have a place in this world, because he thought it good, and he saw it good to have it so." But,

Secondly, The universal sustentation that he affords to all created beings, generally considered: that is all nothing but mere goodness; for as he had no need of a creation at first, he hath still no need of it, and he that hath raised it up into being out of nothing one moment, might have suffered all to slip and lapse into nothing the next moment again, without injury to what he hath made, or without

loss to himself. His tender mercy is over all his works. He lets all this great variety of creatures that replenish this world, continually draw from him. The eyes of all things look towards him. Nature hath (as it were) set an eye in every thing that is made, only to look up with craving looks to the great Author of all things, and all are sustained suitably as their indigent states require, when all are still useless to him, and advantage him nothing. But,

Thirdly, His continual sparing offending creatures; how constant a testimony and evidence is this of the immense goodness of God! That when he hath those that offend him continually in his power and at his mercy, and he may right himself for what hath been done in a moment, or prevent doing any thing more to his displeasure, and to his dishonour, yet he spares: how admirable goodness is this! It is not oscitancy and neglect, as if he took no notice of what men did. On purpose to obviate such an expression, Moses useth that emphatical expression, (interceding for offending Israel,) "Let the power of my God be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering and slow to anger." Let the power of my God be great. It is not from oscitancy, but power, that guilty creatures are spared, that an offending world is not turned into flames and ashes long ago; that a vindictive fire hath not been preying on it, and vindicating the wrong done to the offended Maker and Lord of all. It is not oscitancy but power, that is, power over himself, the greatest of all powers. Creating power is less; the sustentative power, by which the world is bore up, is less. By the exertion of his power towards his creatures he can easily conquer them; but by this exercise of his power he doth (as it were) conquer himself; withholding himself from those more sudden eruptions of displeasure and wrath, which would argue that these were a predominant thing with him. But he will let the world know it is not so. There is the power of goodness that doth predominate and is governing. It is admirable in itself, and ought to be so in our estimate, that this world which hath, for so many thousand years, been inhabited and possessed by rebels against the crown and throne and dignity of the Eternal King, is yet spared, and they let propagate their kind, and transmit their nature, though they do, with it, transmit the poison and malignity of an inveterate hate and enmity against the Author of their being. How admirable is the divine goodness, that shows itself in this patience and long-suffering towards a guilty world! We are taught so to account; "Despisest thou the riches of his forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Rom. ii. 4. And again.

Fourthly, We are to consider as a further instance and evidence of this immense goodness of God, that he is pleased to take such care of the children of men, in their several successive ages and generations, as we find he continually doth; not only sparing them but providing for them; which is a plain and most constantly positive instance and exemplification of this goodness whereof we speak. Two ways he doth more especially take care of the offending creatures that do possess and inhabit this earth of ours; partly by laws, and partly by providence.

i. By Laws. How much of the goodness of God is seen by those very laws which he hath taken care shall have place in this world, and by which any thing of common order is preserved? How admirable is it that he should so concern himself for the tranquillity and peace and welfare of those that are in a confederacy and combination against him, and have been so from one generation to another! How wonderful is it! It is owing, partly, to the impressions he hath made and left upon the minds and nature of men, that there are any such laws as go under the name of the laws of nature, which have this tendency and design, to keep the world in a peaceful and quiet state; and do so, as far as they obtain and prevail. And indeed, there is none that do any thing to the disturbance and disquiet of the world, but they abandon the law of their nature in what they do, and offer violence to themselves. But any such law of nature we must understand to have proceeded from the Author of nature, and we must understand it to have been preserved and kept alive among men, by him that doth preserve the nature of man, and doth take care that there should be successions of such creatures in this world. Consider how tender he is of the life of man, that he hath provided, that there should be such a law, even in man's nature, against murder, of which the municipal laws of several countries are all transcripts, and all owing to the general Legislator. Whatsoever laws of this or that country do agree with the natural law, they are all from the supreme Legislator, and are but discoveries of the care and concern that the common Ruler of this world hath to preserve such a creature as man on earth, from violence and wrong. And so likewise, the laws that do obtain any where for the preservation of property, and for the preservation of chastity, and for the preservation of fame and reputation among men, and the like; that men may not be injured in such respects: they are all so many instances and exemplifications of the great and general benignity of the common Lord and Author of all things, towards his poor creatures in this world, though he beheld his nature poisoned with enmity and malignity against himself, and though that creature takes no notice of him in all this. And then,

ii. The case is seen, not only in the provision he hath made by laws, but which he continually makes by providence, for the sustentation of these, his offending creatures. So you see the text refers us to these very instances, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:" that you may represent and show forth the divine nature in yourselves, that you may show yourselves born of God, with such a nature as God hath; give some proofs and discoveries of the divine nature in you, because he doth thus; loves his enemies, doth good to them that hate him, feeds them with breath, with bread, with all the necessary supports of life, in a continual course from day to day. And again,

Fifthly, It doth further evidence and exemplify divine goodness, and how perfect he is therein, that there is any derivation hereof to be found any where among men, that there is any such thing among men as goodness towards one another, in any degree of it. Wheresoever there is to be found more or less of that which we call good nature, if there be any thing of humanity, of an aptness to do good to others, or an unaptness to do them hurt, or to take pleasure in their infelicities or miseries, these are so many specimens of goodness that are derived, and their very derivation speaks a fountain from whence they come. There can be no borrowed or participated goodness but must suppose, and imply, a first goodness whence it proceeds. If there be any the least goodness, in any creature, this refers us to God, prompts us to look towards him with adoring eyes. This is a little rivulet from an immense ocean, a beam, a ray from that Sun of love and goodness, from that Nature that is all goodness and all love itself, in the very essence of it. This we ought to consider, if we meet with any kindness in this world, if we see any efforts, any discoveries of pity, of compassion and mercifulness in one towards another, this is all goodness from the First Goodness. All this shows there is one Immense Goodness, whence all such little parcels of goodness do proceed and come. Even in this apostate and fallen world we see some such appearances of the divine image (as was said) yet left. We see man hath love in his nature, something of goodness in his nature, a proneness to do acts of goodness and beneficence to some or other, as they come in his way: this should presently make us fall adoring the Supreme Goodness in all this. But then,

Sixthly, The design of recovering apostate, fallen man is, beyond all things, a most admirable discovery of divine goodness; that ever he should have formed such a design. Here is such a creature, such an order of creatures, such a sort of creatures, fallen, sunk, lost, become miserable, and miserable by their own delinquency, by their own apostacy, that is, by their own choice: they have chosen the way that leads down to the chambers of death and eternal ruin. Now, that in this case he should form a design with himself, "I will yet settle a course wherein such creatures as these may be recovered and saved, even from a self-procured ruin." If there were not, I say, a goodness whereof no other account could be given, but that it is divine, but that it is of itself, as the Deity is, as the Godhead is; who would ever have imagined but that such creatures having

offended, and by their offensive nature and course, put themselves into a way of perishing, must have been let perish. Nothing more was needful than to let them perish. Why should they not be let perish, when they chose it, when they loved it, and affected the way to it? "They that hate me love death." They that hated wisdom, the Supreme Wisdom, they loved death. And why might they not be left to their own choice, to take the things they love? No, this was God-like, this speaks the goodness of a God, that he will prevent the perishing of self-destroying creatures. "Their destruction is of themselves, but they shall find that in me is their help;" as by the prophet he speaks his own mind and heart. Partly, the design itself, of saving and recovering such creatures, and partly, the strange and most surprising methods for bringing about such a design, may not only beget conviction, but the highest admiration also, of the goodness of God. We should not only acknowledge it, but fall a wondering, and even lose ourselves in wonder. How unaccountable a goodness was this, that rather than such creatures as we should finally and remedilessly perish, God should put on man, become man: that man, a man of sorrows; that man of sorrows, at last a sacrifice on a cross, to bring about a reconciliation between an offended Majesty and offending creatures? What manner of love was this! what a transporting discovery of divine goodness! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. But then, if we add in the next place, to all this,

Seventhly, The various means that he useth to draw and gather in souls, to comply with the terms upon which pardon and reconciliation, and eternal salvation are offered to us. There are his ensigns displayed, there is a Gospel published, there is an office set on foot, which is to last through all ages to the end of time, on purpose to draw and gather in souls; and all these to be looked upon still under the notion of enemies, they whose hearts were full of enmity and hate against him. For whom indeed he hath been doing good, in common kinds, long before: but they never thanked him for all the actings of his patience and sparing mercy. But such things are continually done towards the unthankful and the evil; yea, these he is so intent upon saving from a deserved ruin, and bringing them to partake, even in a blessedness with himself, to unite them with his Son, make them one with him, to possess them with his Spirit; and to one of the greatest wonders of the divine goodness that can be thought of. When he hath given his Son to be a sacrifice for poor sinners, then to give his Spirit to enter into them, and to inhabit and possess them, and dwell in them; that holy, pure Spirit, that Spirit of all goodness and purity, that Spirit of holiness, as he is called, that he should make his entrance into unholy souls, souls that are so many cells of impurity and filthiness, of every thing that is hateful and noisome and loathsome, how admirable a discovery is this of the divine goodness!

LECTURE XXIV.*

And having thus *demonstrated* the divine goodness, my design is to *vindicate* it. And that is, indeed, of so great importance, that I cannot think it fit to leave off from this subject without placing some endeavour that way. It is of the greatest consequence to us, in all the world, to have our souls habitually possessed with a believing, admiring sense of the goodness of God. We should therefore watch with greater jealousy over our souls, in no one point more than this, lest any thought should arise, or lest any injection should fix and have place in our souls, that should any way tend to infer with us a diminution of the goodness of God, that the glory of it should be sullied in our eyes, or that it should be obscured or darkened in any kind: for how much may a thought do of prejudice to that genuine, holy, spiritual affection that should be working back again in ourselves towards a good God! How may that affection be stifled by a thought, if it be not duly and seasonably obviated!

And indeed, there are but these two great objections that can, with any plausibleness, offer themselves against the goodness of God; partly, the eternal miseries that do befall the greater part of mankind; and partly, the temporal calamities that do befall the better part. These two ways, men may object to themselves against the divine goodness, wherein God is here represented as so perfect, that the most should miserably perish, and the best should undergo many hard and grievous things, even in this world. Both these we shall take into consideration, that so, this most necessary part of the idea of the divine perfections may obtain, without any kind of obstruction or objection lying against it in our minds or hearts; so as we may yield ourselves to be entirely swallowed up of the divine goodness.

The former of these is more frequent. And to show how little pretence there can be from thence, how little colour of objection against the divine goodness, I shall lay before you these many considerations:

1. That no such goodness can be as a perfection in God, that shall exclude or diminish any of his other perfections. No such goodness can belong to the nature of God, as any perfection due to it, that shall be exclusive or diminishing of any other perfection. You should not praise a man, but reproach him, if you should give this of him as his character, that he is so very good-natured, as never to make any difference between civilities and affronts.

2. Punitive justice is most certainly a perfection belonging to the nature of God, both as he is a Being universally perfect, and as he is the Ruler of the world, to be exercised in such cases, wherein there is occasion it should have place. This is plain in itself, punitive justice to be exercised where it ought to have place, it is a perfection belonging to the nature of God as he is a Being of universal perfection, and the Ruler of the world: as indeed, the Original Being, the First of Beings, must include all perfection eminently in itself. For there is no perfection that is not somewhat, and there is no something that can come from nothing, and therefore, the First Being must have all perfection in it. And if this be a perfection, (as every man's judgment will tell him it is,) that is, punitive justice, to be exercised upon proper occasions, it cannot but have place in the Divine nature, as he is a Being of universal perfection, and as it necessarily belongs to him, supposing a world, to be the Governor of it. It could be from no other but him; and therefore, can be under no government but his.

3. There can be no place for the exercise of punitive justice, but in reference to creatures governable by a law. Punitive justice can never have place, but towards such creatures as do admit of being governed by a law. Punishment is, properly, nothing else but due animadversion upon an offender against the law to which he is obliged, and which he is put under. This also is plain in itself, and only leads to what I add further,

4. That no creature can be capable of government by a law, but such a one as is endowed with the natural faculties of an understanding and a will. There is no place for a legal government, and so nor, consequently, for the exercise of punitive justice, but toward a creature that is endowed with the natural faculties of an understanding and will, supposing that such a creature be guilty of violating the laws by which he ought to be governed.

5. It can be no reflection upon the nature of God to have made such a creature as man. For that which is the very first instance of divine goodness, it would be very strange that that should be a reflection upon it, cloud it, or obscure it. It evidenceth it most highly, that when it was in the choice of God, and a thing merely depending upon his pleasure, to make such a sort and order of creatures stand up out of nothing into being. This is, I say, the first evidence of his goodness, and speaks nothing to the disparagement of it: "for thy pleasure all things are and were created." And that which ought, from the very reason of the thing, to be matter of highest and most grateful acknowledgment and adoration, must thereupon, necessarily, be an instance of goodness in him to whom such grateful acknowledgments are due, and by whom they are claimed. And it is a saying that carries its own light and reason in

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it, of that ancient, that "If I were capable (saith he) of making an intelligent creature stand up out of nothing, with a present power of using and understanding, the first thing I should expect from him should be, that he fall down and worship me, and make acknowledgment to me, for having been the author of being, and of such a being to him." And then, for the kind of this being which divine goodness hath allotted to it, it makes it a high instance of his goodness itself. So far is it from being a diminution to it, that is, that he hath given us such a sort of being that is merely imitative and resembling of his own, wherein could there have been a greater signification of kindness and goodness, than to form a creature after his own image, with a spiritual, intelligent nature like his own? And,

6. The things that render any creature capable of felicity, do also render it capable of government by a law: that is, reason and will, an intellective and elective faculty; these make a people capable of government by a law, and make them capable of felicity too. As hath been told you, if man had not had a nature endowed with an understanding and a will, he could have been no capable subject of being governed by a law: but then, if he had been destitute of such faculties as these, he could not have been capable of felicity neither. If he had not understanding to apprehend wherein it lies, and a will to unite with it, choose it, and take solace in it, he would be incapable of being a happy creature. And what! can it be any argument against the divine goodness that he hath made man with such a nature as renders him capable of felicity? If he were not capable of government, he could not be capable of felicity; the same things making him capable of the one, and of the other.

7. It must have been a very great blemish upon the divine government, if creatures capable of government by law, should generally offend against the most righteous and equal ones, (as his laws cannot but be,) and there should be no course taken for the punishing of such transgressors. This must be a manifest blemish upon a government. Suppose we, in any government whatsoever, that there should be any such edict and proclamation published, that let the subjects under such a government do what they please, no man shall be animadverted upon, all shall do what is good in their own eyes, and no one be ever called to any account; would this be a commendation of a government? Such a thing is altogether insupposable in the administration of the best and most excellent government that ever was, or ever can be. Consider it in the whole course of it, not the temporal administration abstractly from the future state of things, but the course and the end of it altogether; and it must finally appear the best and most perfect and excellent government that ever was, or ever can be. But how insupposable is it, (I say,) that the best and most perfect government, should ever be liable to such a blemish as this, that let men be never so wicked, it shall fare as well with them as if they were never so dutiful and obedient. The thing speaks itself, and Scripture speaks it, but it speaks not as a notion which it suggests anew, but only that which it takes up and observes, as a thing common to men before. "Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" And see what immediately proceeds, "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee; Shall not the judge of all the world do right?" Gen. xviii. 23, 25. Supposing this as a great fundamental, a principle that did always shine with its own light, and that did evidence itself, that it must belong to the Judge of all the earth to do right: and so put a difference between the righteous and the wicked, that they are not to fare all alike. And again,

8. The very nature of the law, that was original and natural to man, is itself a high evidence and instance of divine goodness. The law of nature, that law (I say) which was original and natural to man, and so inwrought into himself at first, that he was even constituted as a law to himself, because that that was enjoined in it summarily, did carry his own reason in it, had in itself recommending evidence to that conscience wherewith he was created, that God did rule upon those terms that he was to rule himself upon; and so must judge him upon such terms, as upon which he must judge himself. For do but consider, how this law is afterwards summed up all in one word, love. This was the fulfilling of the law, the loving of God above all: the most equal thing in all the world, that the highest and best love should be placed upon the highest and best good. This was that which his law required, that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. Our Saviour gives this, as the summary and principal part of the law that was natural and original to man: and then, the second part is like the former, loving our neighbour as ourselves. How greatly evidential was this divine goodness, that when he had made a creature capable of government by a law, he should give him such a law as this, and impress it upon his mind, so as it might be said, God was not more to govern him by it, than he was to govern himself: and so finally was to judge him by it, as he must needs judge himself! "He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah vi. 8. Walk in that dutiful subjection to God, which must be the necessary and easy product of supreme and sovereign love to him; and then, carry it justly and mercifully towards men. And, certainly, that must needs be an instance and evidence of the greatest goodness in God, that should be the cause of the greatest good in man. Now, do but suppose the world conformed to this law of God, in these two most noble and constituent parts of it; that is, that all the inhabitants of this world did live in the continual love of God, adoring him most gratefully as the great Author of their being, and in a universal and mutual love to one another, each man seeking another's felicity as his own, and having no more design of hurt or mischief against another than he hath against his own life, his own heart; what a happy world were this! And that which tends to happiness, must be from goodness: nothing is plainer. Now, when so admirable a law as this, every part agreeing with the whole, no branch but what is naturally included in this summary, this compendium; I say, when such a law as this was given to man, it is most natural to add, that the same goodness that did enjoin upon man such a law, must also adjoin a penalty to it, a threatening of due punishment for the violation of it; otherwise, the divine government had been ludicrous, if there should have been such a law which is without annexing any penalty. And the better the law, and more unexceptionable, the more clearly righteous and equal is a very severe penalty to be annexed to it; and the annexing it thereunto, is not only what divine goodness must allow, and doth allow, but what it did require. This was a thing not only consistent with divine goodness, but the effect of it, that there should be such intermination added unto such a law. For, if the adding of that sanction to the law, was the aptest means to procure the continual obedience of it, and the law itself had a tendency to the good of the community for whom it was made, then the very addition of the sanction or threatening to the precept of the law, must not only consist with the goodness of it, but proceed from it. Any prince that doth really study the welfare of the governed community, must be understood to adjoin due and proper penalties to good laws, for the good of the people to be governed by them: that the awe of the adjoined threatening may procure obedience, and that obedience, felicity to them that are so governed; so as that such a law being once made, goodness did not only admit of it but did require, that there should be a penalty annexed to it, to enforce obedience. And again,

9. It was never to be expected, that when God made such a creature, he should create him in that which was to be his final state. It could never be looked for from the divine goodness, that making such a creature as man, he should settle him in a final good and happy estate the first day he made him. It can be no way inconsistent with the goodness of God, that having made such a creature as man, he should order him a state of trial, of probation, through which he was to pass into that state which was to be final, and perpetually felicitating. For a final state is a state of retribution, a state of reward. The Scripture so speaks of it, frequently, as you cannot but know. Now I beseech you, what was it to be the reward of? It must be the reward of a foregoing obedience. And therefore, it could never have been expected from the divine goodness, that when God first made man, he should have made it

impossible for him ever to have offended; or when he made any intelligent creature that he should have made it so. Those two great orders of intelligent creatures, angels and men, it is plain enough God made neither of them incapable of offending. And it was not reasonable to expect that he should. But as to ourselves, (for we are more obliged to mind our own concernments,) this is the account we have given us, (Eccles. vii. 29.) "God made man upright; but he hath sought out many inventions." God made him upright, put him into a good state, if he would have liked it, but he must needs fall to his own inventions, to mend it, and try if he could not make to himself a better state than God had made for him. It was never to be expected from the divine goodness, that he should, by almighty, extraordinary power, have prevented this. For the creature that was designed to be rewarded with eternal felicity, for a present temporal obedience, he must be left to the trial of his ingenuity and dutifulness towards his bountiful Creator. Otherwise, there would have been no place, no room for reward. And if there had been no place for punishment, in case of disobedience, there could have been no place of reward, in case of obedience and duty. Therefore I add hereupon,

10. That inasmuch as it was necessary there should be such a law, and the threatening annexed to it, or punishment proportionable to any offence committed against it, the execution, according to the tenor of the threatening, became accordingly and consequently necessary, supposing once the violation of such a law. I speak of that law which was natural and original to man; for that little instance of obedience wherein God did put man at first upon, there could not have been transgression in that, without it had been a violating of the most natural law, in the most noble and essential part of it. Now, if a threatening were necessary to be annexed to a law, the execution of it, in case of a violation of that law, was consequently necessary; yea, and if the threatening did immediately proceed from divine goodness, the execution of the threatening must immediately proceed from it; but not without the intervention of the divine veracity. The goodness of God did lead him to add a due and proportionable threatening to his law: and this law being violated and broken, so as that the threatened punishment became due, it must be executed. That which was ordained from the divine goodness, it comes to be the immediate effects of divine justice, which is not contrary to goodness: it is only in our conception diverse, but far from being contrary. If there had not been such a constitution, the divine goodness had not shone forth with that lustre and evidence that now it doth. And there being such a constitution, his truth and legal justice oblige him, in some way or other, to keep to it, either in kind or equivalency: he must do himself and his own law that right, as to preserve the honour, reputation, and dignity of it, and of his own government concerned herein. Therefore, the execution of such a law, by inflicting the incurred penalty one way or other, was necessarily and unavoidably consequent: so necessary, that one attribute could not in this case have had its sole exercise without injury to some other, which our first consideration was directed against. But then I yet further add,

11. That whatsoever penalty comes to be inflicted upon unreconcileable sinners, in the final and eternal estate, it must be acknowledged that much of divine goodness was exercised and demonstrated towards them before. Suppose an offending creature whose heart was implacable towards God, and so violently addicted to sensual lusts, that he had the authority of his Maker in continual contempt; and his whole life was a defiance to the authority of his justice and government, and the goodness and kindness of the offers he hath made to him; suppose (I say) such a creature incurs never so severe a penalty, he cannot but acknowledge that much of the divine goodness had its exercise and demonstration towards him before. For otherwise, what room or place were there for that expostulation of the apostle, even with them whom he supposeth finally to fall under wrath in the day of God's wrath, and revelation of his righteous judgment; "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and long-suffering, and forbearance? not knowing that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance?" Despisest thou his goodness! This same despising had no object, if there had been no exercise of goodness towards such a one before, and it would suppose this expostulation to be a great impertinency. Despise goodness; it were to despise nothing, if there had been no goodness, and so there could have been no such thing as despising: the thing the apostle chargeth upon such a one; for there can be no act where there is no object. There could be no goodness to be despised, if there had not been the exercise of goodness towards such a one in a former state. Therefore I add,

12. That the general and special goodness of God are things no way inconsistent with one another. These two things do very fairly accord, God's general goodness towards all, and his special goodness towards some. And it argues a very great debility of mind, and shortness of discourse, when any do set these against one another, as if special goodness must destroy the notion of general goodness, or as if general goodness must destroy the notion of special. The matter would be more easily apprehensible, if we would bring it to a case relating to a human government, and suppose the best that is supposable in this world. Would you suppose that the clemency, kindness, and goodness of the best prince that ever was, (or of whom you can form any idea in your own minds,) must oblige him to deal alike with all his subjects, that is, that all persons that are of equal parts, of equal understandings, must be equally preferred, equally dignified? Would the goodness of any prince oblige him to this, that if he find a necessity to have some persons of good parts and understanding to be of a privy council to him, that he must have all to be of that privy council that are of as good parts as they? And shall such a prince not be thought to be good, or his government not to be equal, unless it were so? The best idea that we can form of any government is, that things be equally carried towards all, and yet special favour be towards objects that are not altogether incompetent, at the choice of the ruler. This is the best idea we can form. Bring then the matter to the divine government; we must distinguish between matters of right and matters of favour. For matters of right, we are to expect from it, that God do right to all men universally without exception; but for matters of mere favour, in reference whereunto he is not so much as a debtor by promise, (and he can be a debtor to none by nature,) he can owe nothing to his creature. It is possible for a subject in a human government to oblige his ruler, but no creature can oblige God. A subject in a human government may really deserve favour and kindness at the hands of his rulers, for he can benefit them, it is in his power to profit them, they can really be the better for him; but God can be the better for none of us; therefore, he can be a debtor to none but by promise: we are therefore only to expect from the divine goodness that where he hath promised, there he will be as good as his word; but for unpromised favour, to which the creature can have no title, that there he do dispense arbitrarily as seemeth good to him. And therefore, upon this ground his general goodness towards all, and special goodness towards some, are no inconsistencies one with another. And if he do generally show that goodness in the course of his dispensations to all his creatures, and especially to all the children of men, that every one that considers must acknowledge, then it is no detraction from the goodness that he doth show to all, that he doth somewhat more of mere special favour for others, yea, though it be never so much, or though it be never so greatly more. There is no cause or pretence why any man's eye should be evil because his is good. For free and unpromised favours, (and all are unmerited, but such as are not only unmerited but unpromised too,) that he dispense out these arbitrarily, is certainly no repugnancy to the highest and most perfect goodness. I further add,

13. That instances of the general goodness of God towards men are most numerous and undeniable. For besides that he hath given them being, (when it was in his choice and pleasure whether he would or no,) here he entertains them in a world, to the making whereof, none of them did ever contribute any thing; he watches over them by an indulgent providence, supplies them with breath every moment; keeps off, for an appointed time, destructive evils; affords them out of that common bounty of his,

the good things that are necessary for the continuance and comfort of life. How rich is this earth in its productions for offending creatures! I cannot but think of it, many times, with wonder, that considering that this inferior part of God's creation, so soon after it was made, fell under his just displeasure and righteous curse, there yet should be so great variety of productions, every where in this earth, for the entertainment of rebels, or those that for the most part never give thanks for what they enjoy, never look up, although they have a capacity and disposition in their nature (originally) so to do, to adore, to pay reverence to the first and eternal Being. That which some think to be more the difference of a man from a brute than reason is, a natural religion, which some take a great deal of pains with themselves to erase and tear by the roots out of their own souls. Let us consider that which the text refers to, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father, who doth good to the evil and the good, makes his sun to shine and his rain to fall on one and the other;" do so, that you may represent your Father; herein lies his perfection. This whole earth that men fill with their wickedness, he fills with his goodness, "The whole earth is full of the goodness of the Lord," Psalm xxxiii. 5. "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works," Psalm cxlv. 9. "He hath not left himself without witness, in that he doeth good, and gives fruitful seasons, and fills men's hearts with food and gladness," Acts xiv. 17. And I further add,

14. That even those instances of divine goodness that are of an inferior kind, have a tendency and aptitude in them to make way for the exercise of his goodness to them, in a higher and nobler kind. The goodness which God exerciseth towards men in the concernments of this natural life of theirs, they have a tendency and aptitude to affect their minds, and to beget good impressions there, and to make them consider and bethink themselves, "Whence is all this? and how comes it to pass that such provision should be made for one, and for creatures generally, of that order to which I belong?" This is the tendency, even of external mercies. Whereupon, it is spoken of with such resentment, "They say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways—yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked be far from me," Job xxi. 14, 15. And the same you have resumed afterwards, in the next chapter, implying that the tendency of things did run quite otherwise; that is, to allure and draw the minds and hearts of men towards God; and make them consider and bethink themselves, and say, Why should we not covet to know our great Benefactor, and him from whom all our good comes? But they say unto him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;"—"though he filled their houses with good things;" and therefore is there such a resentment afterwards expressed; "but the counsel of the wicked be far from me;" representing them as a monstrous sort of creatures, a sort of prodigies in the world, that there should be such a disaffection in rebellious and obdurate hearts against the Author of all goodness and kindness and mercy, that is in so continued a course exercised towards them. The counsel of the wicked be far from me; as if any serious and considering man must, and ought to be startled and affrighted at beholding such a spectacle as this, a reasonable, intelligent soul shunning and fleeing away from him who is daily loading it with his benefits, and seeking, by kindness and goodness, to insinuate himself into it, and so make room and place for himself, in the love and kindness of such a one. But that these dispensations have this tendency in them, the Scripture is full of it; "Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" hath a leadingness thereto, in that mentioned Rom. ii. 4. "And count, (saith the apostle Peter in his 2 Epis. ch. iii. 15.) that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation;" (he would not have us make a false count, I hope;) reckon that he is aiming at the saving of your souls, while he is doing good to you in external respects. If he feed you with bread, if he feed you with breath day by day, and moment by moment, what is it for? Is it only to support such a despicable thing as this frail body of yours is, which must shortly become a carcass? Is that the utmost of his design? No, he is leading thee to repentance, and would have thee account that both his bounty and his patience towards thee have salvation in design. Count the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation, that is, it is the design of the thing; it is that which the thing itself doth naturally aim at, and lead unto. And hereupon, we are told in that, Acts xiv. 16, 17, 18. that God aimed at the turning men from the vanities that their hearts did doat on as the objects of their worship, to the living God; he did aim at this in giving them fruitful seasons, as you may see, if you take notice of the connexion between the 15th and 17th verses of that chapter. So, Acts xvii. he gives them being, breath, and all things, that they might seek after him who is not far from every one of us; in whom we live and move and have our being. And then,

15. Lastly, The terms upon which he offers peace and pardon and eternal life to offending creatures, are the highest proofs and evidences imaginable of the wonderful goodness of God, notwithstanding that so great multitudes do, finally, refuse them and perish. And to this purpose, it should be considered, that the apostle speaks of this as matter of transport more than doubt, and that it did need more to be admired than evinced. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. The silence that is there used is more speaking than any speech could be. He so loved the world, at so stupendous a rate. It is a very speaking silence that he doth not tell us how great that love is; he leaves us to understand it to be altogether inexpressible, that he should give his only Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish—and whereas, men have an impotency to the exercise of that faith that is requisite to their attaining salvation, what is that impotency? It stands only in an affected blindness and obduracy of will; that which they call moral impotency. Now moral impotency doth not excuse, but aggravate the faultiness. No man takes moral impotency to be an excuse, but a high aggravation. As if a man is guilty of murder, and he brings this to excuse him,—"I could not but kill that man because I hated him, I did so violently hate him that I could not but do this unto him." That moral impotency (his extreme hatred) aggravates the crime, that that made it to be done, made it so highly faulty, and so much the more heinous, that it is done. He is not less guilty, but the more, by how much the more his hatred was predominant and prevalent in the case. Why, so this disaffection to God and to Christ and to holiness, (which is impotency,) is an impotency seated in the will, and the ignorance hath its root, it ariseth and proceeds from thence, that is, that men are "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their hearts." A blindness which they love, a blindness which they choose, as it is, Ephes. iv. 18. Whereupon, all their misery is self-created. The miseries wherein men are involved in this world, which make it another hell to them, (a hell on this side hell,) and the miseries of the final and eternal state, they are all self-created; that is, they do arise from a fixed, inveterate malignity against the Author of their being, and that very nature itself, whereof their own, at first, was an imitation. An amazing thing, but it were impossible, if men did love God, to be miserable. Loving him is enjoying him, and enjoying him is felicity, if any thing be, or can be. The image of men's future miseries you have in their present state. What is it that makes the world such a hell as it is, but men's hatred of God and of one another? For (as was said) if there were no contention at all among men on earth, but who should love God best, and one another best, and who should do most for him, and for one another, what a heavenly life should we live here, a heaven on this side heaven: but the hell on this side hell, is only this, that men's hearts are filled with enmity against God, and one another; and from this malignity proceeds their infidelity, that they do not unite to God in Christ when they are called to it: which is no excuse, but an aggravation. But, in the mean time, that is the most wonderful goodness that can be thought, that such overtures should be made to men, God having given his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life

LECTURE XXV.*

And this may suffice to be said, in answer to that first objection against the divine goodness, the eternal miseries of the most. And, indeed, the sum of all that can be said upon that account, doth amount to this, as if it were a thing inconsistent with the goodness of God, that he hath made such a creature as man, given him so excellent a being, made him after his own image, that is, endowed him with a reason and a will, in his very creation; and that, having made him such, he did not alterably fix him in a good and happy state the first day, but that he thought fit to pass him through a state of probation into his final state; and upon this lapse and degeneracy he did not do for every one in order to their recovery as he hath done for some. In answer whereto, you have these considerations laid before you.

But we pass on to the other objection; the temporal afflictions of good men. Some may be prone to impeach the divine goodness upon this account, and object against what hath been said on that subject. But here, such as find themselves disposed so to object, should reflect upon themselves, and consider what they themselves are. Are they good men that do thus object? Or are they such as are afraid to be so on this account, and are thereupon so very officious as to object this on the behalf of others, while they themselves are loth thereupon to become good, apprehending they shall not serve a good master, and are therefore willing to waive and decline his service? If they be men of this latter stamp and character, that do so object, it seems that their sense must be this, that they will never be good themselves, unless God will hire them to it by temporal rewards and emoluments, by indulging them to live a life of ease and pleasure and opulency in the world. And for them whose sense this is, I have but these things briefly to say to them:

1. That true goodness can never be so mercenary. They are never like to become good upon these terms, if God should give them their own terms.

2. I would have them consider what other choice they can have. If they will not serve God, and devote themselves to him, and admit to be such as he requires, (that is, truly good,) but upon these terms, what else will they do? What other master, or service, or way have they to make choice of? Can they, by their not being willingly subject to the governing power of God, exempt themselves from an unwilling subjection to his vindictive power? Whither will they betake themselves? will they leave God's dominion's? will they go beyond the bounds of his territories? whither will they fly? Neither earth, nor heaven, nor hell, can keep them out of his reach; as the Psalmist at large speaks it in that 139th Psalm, and the prophet Jeremiah in the 23rd chap. of his prophecy. "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Is it to be a disputed thing between him and you, whether you shall serve him and comply with his good and acceptable will? And,

3. If God should give such men their terms, whereas they appear to be in the temper of their spirits bad enough already, they have a great deal of reason to think that would make them a great deal worse. It needs abundance of previous and preventing grace not to be the worse for a good condition, here in this world, as all experience shows. And,

4. Lastly, I would appeal to such, whether God is not, in such respects, abundantly good to them already. Hath he not given you breath, and being, and all things that you enjoy? How great are the favours that you partake of, in common with the rest of men! To instance in what the context mentions; "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and on the unjust." What a case were you in, if God should put out the sun, and if he should turn the fruitful land in which you dwell, into universal barrenness, by continual withholding his rain? If he should turn your present health into continual sickly languishings, and your ease into tormenting pains, and your plenty into pinching wants and straits? And more than all this, if he should turn his invitations to you to pray and supplicate for higher, and those that may tend to eternal mercies, into prohibitions; and say to you, "Never pray, never supplicate, never look up, I will receive no addresses from you?" If his invitations to you to surrender yourselves, and become his, and take him for yours, should be turned into protestations against it, "I will never be your God, and you shall never be my people?" Think, while this is not the case, if God be not abundantly good to you already, so that upon your own account you have very little reason to contest the matter with him.

But, if good men do object this, as possibly against their more habitual frame, under the power of some temptation, they may be apt to do, as we find it was with the Psalmist in the 73rd Psalm; and the like offence and scandal good men are represented as, sometimes, apt to take at their own afflicted condition, compared with the prosperous state of worse men, against which much of that 37th Psalm is directed, and that 21st of Job; and the beginning of the 12th chap. of Jeremiah's prophecy; let such but go into the sanctuary, as the Psalmist did, (in that 73rd Psalm,) retire themselves, consider the thing in the secret Divine presence, and commune with God about the matter, and not with their own souls, nor consult with flesh and blood, and let them but consider such things as these, briefly,

(1.) Whether this matter of fact be ordinarily and generally true, that the case of good men is worse than that of wicked men in external respects. It is a matter that deserves to be considered and inquired wisely about; and certainly, upon inquiry, it will rather be found otherwise; that is, except in the paroxysm of persecution against instituted religion; (for it is very rare that men should be persecuted for natural; but) "if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus," he must expect to "suffer persecution." I say, except in some such paroxysm of persecution upon such an account, for Christianity itself, as to those that live among pagans, or for this or that institution of them that live among Christians, that case being excepted which is not constant; ordinarily, it appears evident that the better men are, the better their state and condition are in this world. Their religion obligeth them to that temperance, sobriety, and diligence in their callings, prudent and discreet management of their affairs, that in ordinary cases it is most plain and manifest, that there are much fewer who are ruined by their religion, than that are ruined by their wickedness, by their riot, and by their debauchery; more persons, more estates, and more families are ruined that way, if there be but a survey taken of the state of things in this world: and the apostle offers this very consideration, (in that 1 Cor. x. 13. even to the very suffering Christians of that time,) "There hath no temptation" (that is tentative affliction) "befallen you, but what is common to men," but what is human. It is true, the account is not common, but the matter of the affliction or the afflictions materially considered, are common to men. Are good men thrown into jails, and sometimes put to death for their religion? Truly, so are bad men for their wickedness, as frequently, and, if we should make a general computation, much more frequently. They suffer the same things very commonly, upon a less comfortable account. And,

(2.) Where this is really the very case, that the condition of God and holy men is, in this world, much worse than that of the worst men, as many times it is so, they are to consider the vastly different value of spiritual and temporal good things; and this is the great business of a Christian, to labour to have that spiritual sense in exercise, by which to be able to discern between good and evil, and to prefer the things that are more excellent; as those two scriptures compared together speak, Heb. v. 14. and Phil. iii. 8. They ought to have their naked, unvitiated senses by which to discern between good and evil, and to abound in that judgment and sense, in all sense, by which they may distinguish the things that differ, and prefer (as that expression admits to be read) the things that are more excellent. And then, how much greater is the value of a sound and well tempered mind and spirit, above that of all earthly and worldly accommodations and enjoyments ima-

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ginable, which are but the gratifications of our flesh and external sense, at best. And,

(3.) Such are to consider what is the experience of Christians of all times, concerning the aptitude and useful subserviency of external afflictions to inward and spiritual advantage; they say, when they are in their calmer and more considering frames, that it is good for them that they were afflicted, and, that God hath done it in very faithfulness to them. And,

(4.) Lastly, It is God's own declared end, in the temporal afflictions he lets befall his, and therefore, would have them count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations, that is, tentative afflictions, James i. 2. Count it all joy, because it made greatly for their perfection. The trial of your faith worketh patience, therefore count it all joy; implying, there is more of real good in that one single excellency of patience, than can be of evil in all the external afflictions, absolutely resigned and submitted to the divine pleasure. Here is so much of an inchoate heaven, such a heaven as our present state admits of, this one thing hath, as is not only enough to make us patient, but joyful, under the various temptations and trials of this kind, that we are apt to fall into, or lie under. And hereupon, where this sense hath been impressed upon the hearts of good men, they have thought the sufferings of the present time were not worthy to be compared with the end of them, which was to be wrought out thereby, as in that Rom. viii. 18. "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." This is my arithmetic, so I account, or this is my logic, so I reason; the word may be rendered either way, this is the rational estimate I make of this case, having turned it round, and viewed it on every side, and balanced things with things, that the sufferings of the present time, this *now* of time, this very point of time, are not worthy to be compared (alas, it is not to be named the same day,) to the glory that is to be revealed. It is as nothing in the account, as if we should weigh a feather against a mountain. This is my rational estimate and judgment in this case. And, that God doth design the afflictions of this present state, as a preparation for the future and eternal state, we have most expressly laid down in that 2 Cor. iv. 17. "The light afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It is a *metathesis* which is not usual in Scripture; do work for us, that is, indeed, do work us for it. And it is to be understood, principally, of subjective glory, not objective; for that can never be more or less to any: it is essentially the same in itself with divine glory, but subjective glory, not objective. It is essentially the same in itself with divine glory; but subjective glory to be impressed, that is, more or less, according to the capacity and disposition of the subject. And we grow more capable, and are larger vessels, receptive of greater glory, as our temper is; and our temper is better, and made more receptive of larger and more glorious communications, even by the sufferings of this present time. By the light afflictions which are but for a moment, we are so much the more apt for the eternal weight of glory, which is to ensue; which we are not barely to be told, but to bear, answerable to the notion of weight. We are not only to be mere spectators of the glory there spoken of, but the subjects of it. And then, if this be all that God doth design by the afflictions that he lets befall good men here in this world, to refine them, to make them more partakers of his own holiness, and consequently of fuller glory, greater and higher measures of glory, is this any ground of taking up diminishing thoughts concerning his goodness? Yea, I might add,

It is that which his very relation doth oblige him to, even as he is our Father: your heavenly Father is perfect. For what a Father is he to us? or in what sense is he Father to his own? He is the Father of their spirits; so his word speaks contradistinguishingly of him to the fathers of our flesh. Of the flesh we have other fathers, Heb. xii. 9. He is not the Father of our flesh; he is the Creator of it; but of our spirits he is the Father. He is the Father of them, both upon a natural and supernatural account; as they have his natural image, being intelligent and spiritual beings like his own; and as his regenerate children have his holy image renewed in them. Now the very relation doth oblige him (if he be a Father to us, that is, to our spirits) more principally to mind the advantage of our spirits. That very relation doth not only admit, but require, that he should let us suffer in our flesh, if it may be for the advantage of our spirits; and that this outward man should be beaten and shattered day by day, even unto perishing, if, while this is a doing and suffering, the inward man may be renewed day by day. He must take the principal care about that to which he is a Father. Affection must follow the relation; the relation is to our spirits, and the affection must be, principally, to our spirits.

But I shall insist no further on that part. It remains only to make somewhat of *Use* of what hath been said, especially touching this divine perfection of the goodness of God. And,

1. Be hereupon encouraged to cherish this apprehension concerning God, take heed that nothing ever shake your fixed belief and apprehension of this. And whatsoever reasonings do arise in your minds at any time, forelay this always, let it be always a thing forelaid in you. Yet God is good to Israel, as the Psalmist begins that 73rd Psalm. Nothing can be of greater importance, either to the liveliness and vigour, or even to the very substance and being, of religion, than a fixed, stable apprehension of the divine goodness: that religion is nothing, the soul whereof is not love. If love be not the very soul of your religion, your religion is a carcass, an empty nothing. But that love may be the soul of it, there must be a constant apprehension of the loveliness of the object. Labour then to have your souls possessed always with a deep and fixed apprehension of the divine goodness. Contemplate it in every thing that you behold, in every thing that you enjoy, yea, even in the lessening and qualifying of those evils that you suffer. Go up and down this world with hearts full of this thought; "the whole earth is full of his goodness." Collect all the instances you can of the goodness of God, and keep by that means such an apprehension alive and in vigour concerning him. What a mighty spring would this be of cheerful, and joyful, and pleasant religion! Let no thought arise, but let it meet with a seasonable check, if it tend to any diminution of divine goodness. And,

2. Preserve a worshipping, adoring frame of spirit Godward upon this very account, having your hearts full of this apprehension and sense; labour always to be in a posture of adoration, apt and ready always to look up, carrying that as a motto engraven on your hearts, "I am less than the least of all thy mercies." And again,

3. Endeavour as much as in you is, accordingly to look upon that immediate promanation of the divine goodness, his law; that which issues, which proceeds so directly from the goodness of God. Esteem it to be what really it is, the product and image of the divine goodness. Look upon him as absolutely, universally perfect, and consider the reasonableness of what is said concerning this law, in correspondency thereunto. "The law of the Lord is perfect," Psalm xix. 7. And considering this one single perfection of the Divine Being, his goodness, make a proportionable judgment concerning his law, in reference to that; that is, that it is an expression of his good and acceptable will: and labour, more and more, to prove that by a vital sense, by an experimental relish in your own spirits. O! how good is it to be what he would have me to be! what that most perfect rule of his doth require and oblige me to be! And,

4. Accordingly judge concerning the course of his providential dispensations. His law prescribes to us the way in which we are to walk; his providences make the way in which he walks; labour to apprehend goodness therein too. All his ways are mercy and truth. That is, you are to judge according to the series of his providences complexly taken, and as together they do make up one entire frame. And so, indeed, we are to make up our judgment concerning his law. Not by this or that particular precept, for it would be a very hard imposition upon the mind of a man, to judge and pronounce concerning the goodness of that command to pluck out the right eye, or cut off the right hand, or the right foot, abstractly taken, without reference to the conjunct precepts, and without reference to

the end, to which, altogether, they refer. And so, if you look upon providence, you are not to pronounce concerning this or that, separately and apart, considered by itself. As you would not make a judgment of the goodness of a piece of arras by looking on it folded up, where you can only discern a piece of a leg, or a piece of an arm, it may be, or the limb of a tree, but look upon it unfolded, and there see the entire frame of it all at once. So consider the providences of God, in reference one to another, and in reference to their end in which all things shall finally issue, and into which they shall result, and you must say as the Psalmist doth, "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth." And as Moses, in that triumphant song of his, in the 33nd Deut. where he tells us in the beginning, his design was to publish the name of the Lord, that is, to represent the glory of his attributes; "Because (saith he) I will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe ye greatness to our God: He is the rock, his work is perfect." Take all together, you will see it will be perfect work at length, entire, all of a piece; and that nothing could have been spared out of that series and chain of providence that compose and make up the whole course. And then,

5. Endeavour that your knowledge of God may be practical, vital, unitive, and transforming, as touching this very thing, the divine goodness. O! how much to be lamented is it, that we should have such a notion of God in our minds to no purpose! the notion of so great a thing, a Being absolutely perfect and infinite, even in this perfection, goodness itself, immense goodness, lying in our minds, idle, dead, useless, and in vain; so that our hearts are in reference hereunto but a mere *rasa tabula;* there is a notion in our minds, but nothing correspondent impressed upon our hearts. Such an apprehension of God as this, if it were vital, lively, and operative, would transform us, make us aim continually to be such as he is, which I shall further press by and by. It would powerfully attract and draw us into union with him. What! shall I live at a distance from the Fountain of all goodness, immense goodness, goodness itself, love itself? God is love. He that believes the love of God, is hereupon drawn to dwell in God as he is love, considered under that notion, and so to have God to dwell in him: as the apostle expresseth it, 1 John iv. 16. What mighty influence would this have upon our whole course, if we did go with lively, operative apprehensions up and down the world of the divine goodness! How should we disburden our souls of care! With what cheerfulness should we serve him! How little doubt should we have concerning the issue of things! of that glorious reward which a course of obedience, service, and fidelity to him, a little will be followed with at last. But that our knowledge of God, as to so great a thing as this, should be like no knowledge, as if we knew nothing, or as if we thought the quite contrary concerning him; methinks, this we should look upon as an insufferable thing, as a thing not to be endured, and so take up resolutions, dependent upon his grace, never to be at rest till our hearts were like this apprehension of God, that he is perfect in goodness. And hereupon further,

6. Make sure of your relation to him as your God, as your Father; and consider and contemplate his goodness with that very design, that you may be indeed stirred up to him at coming, without more ado, into that relation. We do not much concern ourselves so seriously to inquire touching the character of a person with whom we are never to have to do, with whom we have no concern, nor ever expect to have any. If we hear of any such as an excellent person, we hear such a thing of him with more indifferency of mind, "I do not know him, and I am like never to know him; and, be as good and as excellent as he will, I am never like to be the better for him." But when I receive an account of one, as a most excellent person, who designs to adopt me at the same time for his son, and overtures are made to me for that purpose, I think myself highly concerned to inquire into the character of a person to whom I am to be related. And so should we consider the characters that we meet with of God; for we must either have him as our Father, or we must be children of a worse father or of the worst of fathers. Therefore, this should be hearkened unto, your heavenly Father is perfect, perfectly good, perfect in goodness, upon this account, that overtures are made to me in order to my becoming one of his children: I am to come into his family; this is the thing that is proposed to me. And should not I labour to know what a one he is, and to contemplate the representation that is made to me of him, upon this account? And,

7. Consider with highest admiration and gratitude, the greatness, the privilege, that you are or may be so related. As the case is stated, if this be not, there is nothing wanting but your own willing and joyous acceptance of the overture, falling in with it, resigning and giving up yourselves most absolutely and entirely to him; and taking his Christ for yours; with him goes the sonship, that is, with the acceptance of his own eternal Son. John i. 12. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed in his name." And then, consider the greatness of the privilege, that you are, or may be, thus related to the Most High God as a Father, to the best, most perfect, and most excellent of beings. You may have him for your Father, and perhaps you have him so already. How great a privilege is this! To have him for your Father is to have all. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son, Rev. xxi. 7. "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." God is to be your portion and inheritance, that if we suffer together with him (which is but a trifle not to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed) we may be also glorified together, Rom. viii. 17, 18. Methinks, this should run in our minds every day; we are either related to this blessed One as our Father, or we may be; we are invited and called by the Gospel (and it is the great design of this Gospel) into this blessed state. Methinks it should run in our minds all the day long, that that glorious and most excellent One should look down from heaven upon such an abject worm as I, and say to me, "Call me Father, take me for thy Father." A heart that were full of the sense of this, would soon grow too big for all this world. What a trifle would this world be to that soul which were full of that sense; "God is become my Father, I have a Father in heaven, that doth whatsoever he will in heaven and in earth, and there is no withstanding him." He can do what he will, and he will do nothing but what is kind and good to them that willingly consent to come into this comfortable relation to him. You see how distinguishly such a case is spoken of in the next chapter, Matt. vi. in the latter end. Do not you so and so like the gentiles. Do not torture yourselves with cares and thoughts, "what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and what you shall put on," and what shall become of your affairs and concerns in the world, and the like: the gentiles do so; after these things do the gentiles seek; but your heavenly Father knows what you need; you have a Father in heaven that knows all your concernments, and that minds all of them, with all wisdom, and all the tenderness and kindness imaginable: I would not have you be as if you had no Father, to put yourselves into the same condition with pagans and outcasts, and those that are without God in the world. And then,

8. Lastly, Imitate God in his imitable perfections, and especially in this his goodness. I say, imitate him with all the goodness that is possible, in all his perfections: "Be ye perfect, for your heavenly Father is perfect." So I would shut up, bringing the exhortation in the text, and inferring reason together. And pray drive it to this one particular thing, to which the context draws and claims it, that is, unto love; and even unto such love as shall reach enemies themselves. You very well know, that God could have shown no love at all to any in all this world, but he must show it to an enemy: all were in enmity and rebellion against him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And this world was only possessed with such inhabitants, all sunk in carnality and earthliness, and deep oblivion of God, and full of anger and displeasure, upon being put in mind that there is One that claims a right over them, and that would have all their thoughts and their love: this they cannot endure; this carnalized race of creatures cannot bear this. "For the carnal mind is enmity against God." And he could never have been kind to men but he must be kind to enemies. For all were become his enemies, affected liberty, and could not endure

the thought that there should be a power and a Lord to prescribe to them. I pray, let us labour to imitate this great perfection of the divine goodness, even in this very application of it to enemies. This is the beauty and the glory of the Christian religion, the thing wherein it excels the precepts of the most refined paganism, and of that which was higher, (as it was grown,) Judaism itself. "You have heard that it was said of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy;" (as it is in the context;) "but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." I never expect the Christian religion to flourish much in this world, till this appear and be exercised as the common temper of Christians. They are to be such a sort of men, as that all the world may be the better for. If you express never so much of unkindness towards them, if you use them hardly, they will bless you, they will pray for you, they will do you all the good they can, all the good and kind offices in their power. When this spirit comes to be revived among men, it will make the Christian religion (as I may say) *grassari*, mightily to prevail and grow upon the world. The world must fall before such a sort of men as this. But that it will never do while, in this respect, Christians are just like other men, as wrathful, as vindictive, as full of rage, and as full of revenge, as any body else. Christian religion must grow upon the world, by things that will strike the sense, that incur the most sensible observation of men. Every one can tell and sees it when one is kind to them, and when they have good returned for evil. But there are two things most directly opposite to this temper, which Christians are wont too frequently to overlook, never to animadvert upon: the one is,

(1.) When they let their hearts tumultuate with too great fervour and anger against men, upon account of their profaneness and irreligiousness; and they think themselves warranted so to do: such a one is a wicked man, an open, visible enemy against God and Christ, a rebel against heaven. And so they allow themselves to let wrath have its vent and liberty towards such men, and upon such occasions. It was a great deal of zeal for Christ that the disciples discovered, when they would have had fire to fall down from heaven to vindicate his cause upon those Samaritans that would not receive him into their town. But, saith Christ, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." This is quite another thing from that spirit which I intend to introduce into the world, and which must breathe in, and animate, the religion that I am setting on foot among men. The other is,

(2.) Their confining their kindness and respects to men of such and such a character, to this or that party. It is a temper more grossly remote, more vastly different from what is enjoined upon us here; and the thing that our Saviour animadverts upon in this context, as that wherein we do not only not exceed the Pharisees as such, but even publicans themselves, ver. 20. We are told, that except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God; not even into the initial kingdom. As if he had said, "Ye are not fit for the Christian state, you do not come within the confines of Christianity, real Christianity, if your righteousness do not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. But when men do confine their respects and the kindness of their hearts to a party, this is not only to outdo the Pharisees, but even publicans and sinners, for they do so; if you love and salute them that love and salute you, if you are kind to them that are kind to you, what do you more than others? do not even the publicans and sinners the same? But "be ye perfect,"—(that is the contexture of this discourse,) "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

And so I have done with what I designed upon this subject, of the divine perfections or attributes: the next we come in course to, will be that of the divine decrees and purposes of God; and more especially concerning men, and with reference to them.

THE PRINCIPLES OF

THE ORACLES OF GOD.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART II.

CONTAINING

I. THE DECREES, OR COUNSELS OF GOD, IN EIGHT LECTURES, ON EPHES. I. 11.

II. GOD'S WORK OF CREATION IN SEVEN LECTURES, ON HEB. XI. 3.

III. GOD'S CREATION OF MAN, IN FIVE LECTURES, ON GEN. I. 27.

IV. THE FALL OF THE FIRST MAN, AND THE FALLEN STATE OF MAN, WITH THE DEATH AND MISERY CONSEQUENT ON EACH OF THEM, IN FOURTEEN LECTURES, ON ROMANS V. 12.

V. THE JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD VINDICATED, AS TO ALL MEN'S COMING INTO THE WORLD WITH DEPRAVED NATURES, IN EIGHT LECTURES, ON PSALM LI. 4, 5.

VI. THE GENERAL AND SPECIAL GRACE OF GOD, IN ORDER TO THE RECOVERY OF APOSTATE SOULS, IN THREE LECTURES, ON LUKE II. 14.

LECTURE I.*

EPHESIANS I. 11.

IN WHOM ALSO WE HAVE OBTAINED AN INHERITANCE, BEING PREDESTINATED ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL.

HAVING discoursed to you, what I thought requisite, concerning the attributes and perfections of the Divine Being, we now come, according to the order of discourse, to speak to you of the DIVINE DECREES. I choose to call them by that name, because, by divines, they are usually so called; though according to the more ordinary use of that word in Scripture, it more frequently signifies public laws or edicts, whether human or divine, than private and secret purposes. And so in common speech too, and other writings, nothing is more usual than to call the constitutions of states and princes, *decreta*. But however the word being so explained, to signify a secret purpose, antecedent to any manifestation, it may then fitly enough be so used; and in that sense it is generally understood by divines, treating on the head of religion.

And upon this subject, my design is not to speak to every thing that is disputed in the schools about it; but only what may be requisite and sufficient unto the common faith and practice of Christians. Nor shall I need to lay down any other doctrine, than the very words of the text, that—God "worketh all things, according to the counsel of his own will,"—wherein you do see, there are several particulars to be considered. There is,

1. The final term of all God's works, that wherein they do directly terminate, *All things*.

2. There is his workings itself, tending towards that term, he *worketh* all things.

3. There is his purpose and volition of all that he worketh, called his *will*. And

4. There is the supreme measure of all those volitions or acts of his will, and so of his subsequent actions, and that of his counsel. He worketh all things according to the *counsel* of his own will.

I shall speak briefly to each of these, but most largely to that which is our most proper subject, with reference to the purpose for which we have chosen to insist upon these words, that is, the will of God; not merely the faculty, but the acts of his will. But we shall briefly go over the several particulars already mentioned.

1. For the things wherein the acts willed by him do finally terminate, which we are told are *all things*, and that universality may be understood two ways, either relatively, in reference to those works that do terminate in these things; as if he said, all things that he works, he works according to the counsel of his will. Or else, also, it may be understood absolutely and simply, there being simply nothing at all unto which his agency, one way or other, extends not; though not to every thing in the same way; as there will be occasion to show hereafter.

2. For his working that terminates in these things, that is, in all things; it is emphatically expressed in the text: the word is ἐνεργοῦντος, in-acting, or in-working all things. It shows the peculiar kind of the divine agency, such as nothing can exclude, and nothing can disappoint. And then,

* Preached December 28th, 1691.

3. There is his will itself, which must be looked upon as the immediate source of all these operations of his. And that we shall consider, not only as it is the measure of all his actions, but as it is self-measured by that counsel, that lies in his eternal and all-comprehending mind, which is the fourth particular in order that we have briefly to consider. And touching that,

4. We must know that it cannot be understood in the same sense with God, and with men, as indeed nothing can that comes under the same name with him and with us; for nothing can be absolutely common between God and the creature, or have precisely the same common notion: there cannot but be infinite difference, always, between whatsoever is finite, and that which is infinite. Counsel with men imports imperfection; it signifies that we have not suddenly a perspection of the reason and aptitudes of things, what it is fit for us to resolve, and not to resolve; and do, or not to do. And thereupon, we deliberate, and arrive more slowly and by degrees from a more indistinct perception of the reason of things, to a clearer and more distinct perception of them. With God, it cannot be so, before whose all-seeing eye, all things lie in their aptitudes and correspondencies at one view; so as he doth not see things because they are connected with one another, so as to proceed from the knowledge of things that are more clear, to the knowledge of things that are more obscure; all things being equally clear and equally present, to his eye and to his view. But by way of analogy, that which is effected by counsel among men in the way of consultation, debate of things with themselves, continued discourse, reasonings and arguings of matters in their own minds to and fro, that, which with men hereupon is called judgment, counsel, hath the same name given it with him also. Not that it signifies the same, but that most perfect judgment of things, which is indeed the highest and most exquisite wisdom, which he hath eternally and all at once, when we do arrive to the like by steps. And so according to that perfect perception that he hath of the reason of things, and their aptitudes and correspondencies to one another, and to his creatures, and to him, so accordingly he wills, and accordingly he doth.

And this counsel of his, it may be taken two ways, either, 1st, As it is internal, lying only in his own mind: or else, 2nd, As it hath an after-manifestation, as many of those things which lay from eternity, and through many successions of ages of time, secret in his own mind have, and do come to be revealed and made manifest more or less, and in such degrees as to him hath seemed fit. In that latter sense, counsel is taken frequently in Scripture even when it is spoken of God as these phrases do plainly signify: "If they had stood in my counsel. They despised all my counsel, and set at nought my reproofs. I have declared to you the whole counsel of God," Jer. xxiii. 22. Prov. i. 30. Acts xx. 27.

But here, it must be understood to signify counsel as it is secret, as lying in his own eternal mind, and as it is, thereupon, the measure of all the purposes of his will, and of all he subsequently doth, and hath done, in the creation and continual government of this world. In that latter sense, counsel is, even among men, correspondently in that acceptation of it with God, put for certain, established laws, and constitutions, and even as decrees are. Thus, with the Romans, many constitutions of theirs are known to go under the name of *senatus consulta*, that is, *things consulted of*, and agreed upon, by the governing power among them. But this is not the sense that it is to be taken in here, for notwithstanding much of the counsel of God be manifested, we are to consider it now as antecedent to any such manifestations: and thereupon, to return to that which is our more principal subject, *his will*, according to such counsel, "He works all things after the counsel of his own will;" according to that counsel which doth (as it were) guide and measure all the determinations and purposes of his just and holy will. We are not to understand, that the divine will here signifies the faculty of will, abstractly and precisely, but as comprehending the acts, the volition, the determinations and purposes of the divine will, that which is commonly meant by the word decrees. And so, concerning the will of God and the purposes thereof, I shall first give you some *distinctions*, and then, secondly, lay down what I conceive necessary to be said concerning this subject in certain *propositions*.

First, There are sundry *distinctions* of the divine will, which it may be fit to take some notice of: and some of them will be of great use to us.

1. There are, who distinguish the will of God into antecedent and consequent. But I know no ground for that distinction, there being no first or last with him, or former or latter, as we shall have occasion further to show.

2. Again, some distinguish it into absolute and conditional; but certainly, it is over-bold to feign any such distinction as that, of the divine will, properly so called: it is indeed agreed on all hands that there are conditions of the things willed, but there can be none of the will itself concerning those things; the faculty and act of the will not being distinguishable in God, as they are in us; for he is a pure act: and to suppose there can be a condition of the will itself in God, is to suppose a conditional Deity, and so, consequently, a contingent one, and so, consequently, none at all.

3. Again, some do more truly distinguish the divine will into that which is *bene placite*, and that which is *signi*. And for the former member of that distinction, it is most unexceptionable and scriptural: good pleasure, and the *good pleasure of his will*, we read of again and again in this very context, as well as many times besides in Scripture. But for the other member of the description, it is too obscure for common use; and will require more explication than is proper for this place.

4. It is again distinguishable into his objective and active will, or his will objectively taken and actively taken, so the thing willed is often called the will of God: as when we pray, "Thy will be done," that is, the thing that thou hast willed. And so that of the apostle, in the Acts, "The will of the Lord be done;" and that of our Saviour, "he that doeth the will of my Father," and the like. This is the will of God taken objectively, or for the thing willed. But then, it is taken also actively, as it signifies his volition itself, the purpose and determination of his will; and so it must be taken here.

5. It is again distinguishable into secret and revealed; a very useful and necessary distinction. His will, as it lies concealed within himself, and the same will, in many things made at length known and extant to the world, subjected to the common notice of men; that is, in such things as it concerns them to know and be acquainted with.

6. Others distinguish it into decretive and legislative, which is a very proper distinction too, if we take decretive in the fore-explained sense; otherwise, it falls in with the legislative, and is the same thing.

7. Others distinguish it into the will of purpose and the will of precept, which is a true distinction too. Only, that latter member is not extensive enough; for there are many things which, in the compass of God's revealed will, are necessary for us to know, and even within the compass of his legislative will, besides bare precept; but not in all respects. His will concerns what he will do himself, and it also concerns what he will have us to do. But it is his will concerning his own actions, concerning his own works, of which the text speaks: "He worketh all things," that is his own works, "after the counsel of his own will." And as it doth concern his own works it may concern them diversely: that is, either such works of his as he designs to do immediately, and apart from us, or such works of his as have reference to work of ours, wherein he is to work with us, or wherein he is to work (as in some instances) after us; that is, in those great instances of rewarding and punishing. These works of his come after ours, though the will of them is eternal before. Again,

8. His will is to be distinguished into effective and permissive: his will to effect whatsoever he thinks fit for him to effect; and his will to permit whatsoever he thinks fit to permit, or not to hinder, while what he so wills, or determines so to permit, he intends also to regulate, and not to behold as an idle unconcerned spectator, but to dispose all those *permissa* unto wise and great ends of his own.

These useful distinctions (as there are divers of them) being given, I shall now proceed,

Secondly, To lay down, in divers *propositions*, what is

requisite for us to understand and believe, concerning this matter, of God's purpose, by his counsel, in reference to the things which he works among his creatures, and some of these propositions will be more *general*, and fundamental unto some others, which shall be (God willing) more *particular*. But for the more *general propositions* you may take such as these:

1. That all the purposes of the divine will are co-eternal. There can be no such thing as a new will in God; for there is nothing in God, that is not God; and nothing of God can begin *de novo*: for that were to suppose a new Deity. And hereupon, there can be no place for dispute about the priority or posteriority of this or that purpose of God; they must be all simultaneous, all at once, in one and the same eternal view, according to that clear, and distinct, and all-comprehending prospect that he hath of all things, eternally before his eyes. And though it be true, indeed, that we are constrained to conceive of things, (because we cannot conceive them all at once as he doth,) by first and second, former and latter, and to consider of a natural priority and posteriority, where there is no such thing in real existence; I say, though we are constrained so to do, (which is a thing owing to the imperfection of our minds,) yet, we must take heed of building upon our own foundation schemes and models of the divine decrees, as a great many have perplexed themselves in doing; and wherein we can determine nothing, but with the greatest uncertainty imaginable, nor, indeed, without too great presumption, bringing down the Deity to our human measures and models, and forms of conception. Again,

2. We must take this proposition concerning the will and purposes of God, that they do always connect together means and ends: that is, supposing he hath willed and determined such an end, we must, accordingly, suppose he hath determined with himself the way or means, by which he will bring that end about; supposing it to be a thing to be done immediately: as those things are to be done, and in the same way wherein they are to be brought about, in the same way we must understand he hath determined to bring them about. As when he did intend to preserve David at Keilah, he did also determine he should not stay there, knowing that if he did, the inhabitants would have given him up to Saul, as you may read it was determined, upon David's inquiry, 1 Sam. xxiii. So when he determined to save the life of Paul, and all his companions and fellow-passengers in the ship, where they were in so much jeopardy and danger, he did also determine that the mariners should not go away; for the apostle saith expressly, "If these go away we cannot be saved," after he had expressly, from God, told them, that not a hair of any of their heads should fall to the ground. And therefore, we are not to suppose that he doth determine an end to be brought about by means, but he doth also determine and ascertain the means by which it shall be brought about: so that if he intend any of us to live to such a term of time, he never intends that, and intends at the same time to let us, several years before, starve ourselves, poison or stab ourselves. But determining the end, he also determines those means by which he intends to bring about that end: he intends to bring it about in such a way; that is, in a mediate way.

3. The purposes of God and his foreknowledge are in some sort commensurate: taking foreknowledge in the proper sense, foreknowledge doth refer to futurity, as knowledge, more abstractly taken, doth to all beings actual and possible: all possibilities come within the compass of divine knowledge; but of his foreknowledge, only futurities, or what shall be. And as to these, his purpose and foreknowledge are some way commensurate, that is, whatsoever he foreknows shall be, he either purposeth to effect, or he purposeth not to hinder it. And again,

4. Whatsoever God doth actually bring to pass, that we may conclude he did purpose to bring to pass. Whatsoever he doth, he did purpose to do; for he doth nothing against his will, or without his will: and he can have no new will, as was told you before, and as it is plain in itself. Therefore, whatsoever he actually doth, he did always eternally purpose to do.

5. Whatsoever he actually permits, he did never purpose to hinder. There must be a correspondency between his purpose as to *permissa*, things that are permitted by him, and the things permitted, as there is with reference to *effecta*; between his purpose, and the thing that he effects. Again, further,

6. Whatsoever God might, righteously and consistently with all the other attributes and perfections of his being, effect and do, or permit and suffer, that he might righteously resolve and purpose to do, and resolve and purpose to permit and not to hinder. Whatsoever it is that is consistent with his wisdom, holiness, and goodness, actually to do, it is equally consistent with his wisdom, and with his righteousness, and with his goodness, to purpose to do, even from eternity. And whatsoever was consistent with his wisdom, and righteousness, and goodness to permit it and not to hinder, it is equally consistent with his wisdom, righteousness, and goodness, to purpose not to hinder it; and so, to have a permissive decree concerning it, if he saw meet and fit to do it. And,

7. Whatsoever, in respect to God's actions and purposes, would imply any thing of imperfection, we must sever and remove from him; whatsoever would imply perfection, we must assert and ascribe to him. Hereupon, if it would be a plain, manifest imperfection to act incogitantly, unadvisedly, or to do unintended things, as it were casually and at random, without a foregoing intention or purpose; if that, I say, would be an imperfection, we ought most carefully to sever it from God, and never think it possible for him to act so; that is, incogitantly, unadvisedly, without any foregoing intention or purpose; and if it be a perfection, to act according to wisdom, and counsel, and judgment, and steady purpose, we must by all means assert it concerning God, and ascribe it to him in reference to all his purposes and actions.

These are general propositions that do lay some foundation for more particular ones, which are to follow. And herein, though it is very true that God hath his purposes and decrees concerning all things: "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will," yet, we shall more especially consider his purposes concerning men. You know that must be our business: and therein too, though he hath purposes and decrees concerning all the actions of men, whether personally considered, or considered as members of a community, lesser or larger, civil or ecclesiastical, concerning churches, concerning states and kingdoms, their successions, their rises, their continuance, their periods; though he have, I say, purposes concerning all these, and all within the compass of the text, "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," yet, I shall chiefly keep my discourse to those purposes that concern our spiritual and eternal state. And so shall lay down briefly the other and *particular* propositions. As,

1. That God did, undoubtedly, purpose to make such a world as this, for we find he hath made it; and he doth nothing that he did not purpose to do.

2. He did purpose to make such a creature as man, and place him here; for we also find, so he hath done.

3. He did purpose to create man in an innocent state, and proportionably good and happy unto the innocency and purity in which he did create him. For his word tells us, that he did create him so. He "made man upright." And it gives us an account of the circumstances of his condition when he made him, though briefly, yet as far as was necessary. And,

4. He did not purpose to confirm him at first in that good state wherein he made him, so as to make it impossible for him to fall; for we find he did fall, and is in a lapsed state: therefore, it was purposed that his fall should not be prevented, that it should not be hindered; though none doubt, but that he that made man could have made him as well impeccable, without any possibility of sinning, as he did make him sinless at present, without any thing of depravedness by sin.

5. It is evident, God did not purpose to leave fallen man to perish universally in his apostate, fallen state: for we hear of, and know, the methods and appointed means for the recovery and salvation of fallen creatures, of fallen men, which are offered to our view in the word of God.

6. He did decree or purpose to send his own Son to be a Redeemer and Saviour unto lost and perishing creatures, to be born, to live in this world, to die in pursuance of that reconciling design, and to overcome death; and in his

resurrection and conquest over death, to erect a kingdom into which he would collect, as the voluntary subjects of it, all those that should resign and yield themselves to him, put themselves under his governing power, and submit themselves to his saving mercy, at once. And the substance of this we have given us as the matter of a divine decree, in that Psalm ii. 7. "I will declare the decree. The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Very true it is, that that is not directly meant of the nativity of our Lord: we find the apostle expounds it otherwise, (Acts xiii. 33.) "We declare to you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made to our fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the 2d Psalm," (the most express quotation in the New Testament out of the Old,) "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee: and as concerning that he raised him from the dead *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David." It was in pursuance of a divine, eternal purpose and decree, that this was said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee:" that is, when he raised him from the dead, when he begot him again out of the grave, and by that glorious regeneration, he did then put upon him that high and excellent title, (that was fundamental to the other glorious one that did ensue thereupon,) "The first-begotten from the dead: the Prince of the kings of the earth," Rev. i. 5. But yet, though that be not the thing directly there spoken of, as the matter of the divine decree, God's first bringing him into this world, yet, that being the matter of a divine decree, (to wit,) his dying, and his conquering death, and being begotten (as it were) a second time, or I may say a third time, out of the grave, out of the womb, as his goings forth from eternity in respect of his Deity, and as he was, as man, at first brought out of the womb of the virgin, yet, even that earlier parturition must be supposed here to have been the matter of a divine purpose and decree too. And so other scriptures do speak of the whole complex of this matter, as falling under a divine purpose. "That he verily was foreordained," (as Acts ii. 23.—1 Pet. i. 20. and onwards,) foreordained to every thing he did, and foreordained to every thing he suffered, in pursuance of that great saving design and errand upon which it was determined he should come into this world. And this is that which the context here doth more specially lead us to insist upon. For when the apostle speaks of God doing all things according to the counsel of his own will, he tells us more distinctly what that counsel of his will did concern, and that is in the foregoing verse: "That, in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him." This was the great thing that lay, as the substratum in the divine counsel, to collect and gather all things in Christ, to constitute him as supreme and universal Head to this creation. And whereas, all things were shattered and broken in the apostacy, there was now to be a recapitulation, and gathering all things under one head again, as you see in the close of the chapter. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And this, that was primarily here designed in this context, is that which God hath done according to the counsel of his will. "He doth all things after the counsel of his own will;" but this peculiarly, the sending of his Son into this world, and the establishing of him as the Prince of those reduced from the state of apostacy. As the great destroyer of souls was the prince of the apostacy, the head of the apostate world, upon which account he is called "the god of this world," (2 Cor. iv. 4.) and "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," so was our blessed Lord to be the head of that community that should be collected and gathered out of this world. And this was the great mystery of his will, which he purposed in himself, as the foregoing context is, "In the dispensation of the fulness of time" (by the Christian economy, that is the word there used for dispensation) to collect and gather all under this one glorious head, to recover a people, and raise up a glorious structure, a church, out of a ruining and perishing world, by the Son and eternal God, who was made, in pursuance of this design, the universal Head, also Head over all things, but with special reference to his church. And so was this the matter of divine pleasure; to do this thing in the fulness of time, according as we find in Gal. iv. 4. "In the fulness of time, God sent his Son, born of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons." And as this is the most undoubted matter of divine purpose and decree, so it ought to be the matter of the highest joy and rejoicing; greater than can be expressed by an annual solemnity; such as should run through our lives, and be the matter of every day's rejoicing with us, according to what the first report of this glorious work was, when the womb of divine counsel did teem, and bring forth this glorious birth; when he brought forth the first-begotten into the world, he saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him:" and they did publish the joyful proclamation of it from heaven, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace good will towards men:" the greatest indication of divine good will, and the most significant that ever was known, or ever could be thought, that is, that when men had severed themselves from God, cut themselves off from him; and the world was sunk into a universal oblivion of him, destitute of all inclination towards him, and all interest in him, unapt to make any inquiries after him, or to say, "Where is our God, our Maker?" that they should be so surprisingly told of Emmanuel, God with us: that God should so strangely descend, put on man, be manifested in the flesh, there was the greatest mystery of godliness, that ought to fill heaven and earth with joy and with wonder. For when something like this was apprehended, but upon mistake, in what transports were these pagans! "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men," Acts xiv. 11. And presently they offer at sacrificing. What matter of joy and wonder then, that the glorious, eternal Son of God, should make that descent, that kind descent, into this world of ours! Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself likewise takes part with us of the same: (Heb. ii. 14.) and because we dwelt in fleshly tabernacles, he himself resolved to erect a tabernacle like one of ours: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" (John i. 14.) did tabernacle among us in the expression: this being, as it were, his very sense in this vouchsafement and undertaking: "There is a company of poor creatures that dwell in flesh, or buried in it, rather than do dwell in it, and their flesh is more their grave than their mansion; well! because they are partakers of flesh and blood, and have tabernacles made of flesh, "I will go and set my tabernacle by theirs: they dwell in fleshly tents, and I will go and dwell in such a tent among them." The Son of God was made flesh, did dwell and tabernacle among us in such flesh as we inhabit, excepting the impurity and sinfulness of it. O! what matter of glory and exultation is this! How full of triumph should it fill the souls of men, that such a hope should arise to them, even as a resurrection from the dead! Now we see that God's kindness towards the children of men, is not shut up in everlasting oblivion; it is not suspended from any further exercise for ever; what a glorious instance of it is here!

But as this is matter of highest joy, it ought to be matter of purest joy too. And there is not a little caution requisite in this case. The numerous appearance here this day signifies to me, that there is a great propension to keep on foot an annual solemnity upon this account: and as this is expressive of a disposition to rejoice, or to somewhat of rejoicing, I pray take these cautions in reference to it,—that it be not ignorant rejoicing, that it be not carnal rejoicing, and above all, that it be not wicked rejoicing, more grossly and more sensually wicked.

(1.) Let it not be ignorant rejoicing. Rejoice we may, and must, in such a thing, that according to divine purpose and decree, Christ came into the world, and the Son of God became man, that he might become a sacrifice, and that thereupon he might become a glorious King. To rejoice in this abstractly, that Christ was once born into this world, without understanding or ever desiring to understand what he was thus born for, what was the end of this manifestation and appearance of him in human flesh; this

doth unbecome men, and much more doth it unbecome Christians, it being to rejoice for they know not what. For what is it to us, if we abstract from the ends of the incarnation of the Son of God? if we subject not to the proper ends of it? What is it to us that Christ lived here on earth, somewhat above sixteen hundred years ago, and to rejoice in that he did so, without considering and understanding what it was for, upon what account it was, and with what design? This, I say, is but the joy of a fool: to rejoice in that, the true reason whereof our own gross and voluntary ignorance hides from us; to rejoice when we hear that he came as a Saviour, without considering what he was to save us from, (though we are told at the same time,) when we hear of his being called Emmanuel, God with us, of his being called Jesus, (Matt. i. latter end,) because he should save his people from their sins; to rejoice in Christ, even as an incarnate Saviour, without any thoughts of this, that I am to be saved by him, from that which made the distance, and continues the distance, between God and me; I am to be saved by him from the impurities of my own heart and nature; I am to be saved by him from the vile carnality that hath depressed and sunk my soul, so as never to mind God, never to desire after him, never to delight in him, to have inclinations to pray to him: I say, to rejoice ignorantly in these respects, is to rejoice presumptuously, for we know not what, and over-confidently, against the direction and instruction given to us in that second Psalm. Because God hath declared the decree concerning him, "Thou art my Son," and hath set him as his King upon his holy hill of Zion; and hath resolved to subdue the nations under him, and give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, therefore to serve this mighty King with fear, and rejoice before him with trembling, that is the instruction that is given us. There is a pure and holy Deity hath become incarnate, the Son of God became, here, a God among us, with that resolution, not to bear with the wickedness of the world, and let men run on in their old and wonted course; but to revive God's memorial and the awe and fear of him in the hearts of men; and not to let men live prayerless lives, as they did, and without God in the world, as they did; here was his great design. But now to rejoice in Christ's having been born into the world, without ever considering the design of it; this is not only mean and brutish, but insolent and presumptuous, to rejoice in the thoughts of so sacred and great a thing as this, without having hearts touched and impressed with the apprehension of the pure and holy end of it. And,

(2.) Take heed of rejoicing carnally, with such a kind of joy as shall be exclusive of, or that shall exclude, that spiritual sense we ought to have of so high and mighty an undertaking and intendment as this. How vain and how grossly incongruous and absurd is it to say, that because the Son of God came into this world upon such a design as you have heard, "Therefore, let us eat and drink and be merry; therefore, let us pamper and adorn this flesh;" forgetting that it is inhabited (even this mortal flesh) by an immortal spirit; and forgetting that even this flesh of ours is claimed and challenged to be a temple for the Holy Ghost, and therein made conformed to the flesh of Christ, which is itself such a Temple, and the model according to which all Christian temples, that is, a temple in a temple, in every Christian, ought to be formed. "Know ye not," saith the apostle, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) and they are to be indulged and cared for accordingly. Christ speaks it of his own body, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days!" As he was, even in his human nature, and in his body, a Temple of the living God, so is every Christian to be; and therefore are these bodies of ours to be cared for in subserviency to this design. This body of mine, it is to be the living, animated temple of the Divine, Living Spirit. And what! is it then to be indulged, to be pampered, to be adorned with a fine dress, and is this all that I am to design concerning it? I am to design in it conformity to the great Original Temple, the Son of God. But to rejoice with such a sort of festivity as is only grateful to carnal and fleshly inclination, without any thought of being recovered and brought back to God by this Christ, of having my soul refined, and body and soul made meet to glorify the great God whose they both are; to joy without any thought of this, (I say,) looks more like a pagan than a Christian; and is much more suitable to the paganish than the Christian state. It ought to be considered, Christ took our flesh to make us partakers of his Spirit; he took our nature to make us partakers of his divine nature, escaping the corruptions that are in this world through lust; and to please ourselves in the thoughts of Christ having been born, without any thought of this, is such a carnality as affronts the very pretence that we make of rejoicing in the thoughts of it, that the Son of God did descend and come down to associate himself, and dwell among the sons of men in this world, and to suffer for them, and so to prepare them to dwell with God in the other world.

(3.) But lastly, Take heed of such a kind of rejoicing as is more grossly and sensually wicked, even in itself and in its own nature: that is, to make the season when we, uncertainly, apprehend Christ to have been born into this world, the season of letting loose to all manner of looseness and debauchery, in direct contradiction to, and defiance of, the design of his coming: that is, when we know the Son of God was manifest to take away sin, and to destroy the works of the devil, as the expressions are, (1 John iii. 5, 8.) that we should make it our business to indulge and fulfil those very lusts which he came to destroy and dissolve, and make cease out of the world: what an affront is this to him whose memorial we pretend to celebrate! That is to make that which we imagine to be the day of his birth, to be the day of his most ignominious death, by crucifying afresh to ourselves the Son of God, and putting him to open shame; as if we would proclaim to the world that the design of the Son of God's descent into it, was to give men the liberty of being safely wicked, that they might throw off all restraint, and without any fear or dread of what should follow, abandon themselves to all manner of wickedness, to fulfil the impure lusts of a corrupt, depraved nature, till sin, being finished, should end in eternal death: and so make the Christian religion an inconsistency with itself, and to represent the matter, as if Christ came into the world, not to make men Christians, but to exempt them from being so; and not to destroy sin out of the world, but to exclude and shut out Christianity. As if he came into the world that there might never be any such thing as Christianity in it, that he might bring it about, that men might, with safety and impunity, live in the highest rebellion against the very laws of that Christ by whom they pretend to expect salvation.

But this is one great thing which we see lies under divine purpose and decree, according to the counsel of his will, the sending of his Son into the world to be a Redeemer and Saviour of sinners, by living among them, dying for them, conquering death, ascending to heaven, and erecting that kingdom by which he is to govern the redeemed community unto everlasting life. And by how much the more apparently this was matter of divine purpose according to eternal counsel, so much the higher and more dreadful wickedness must it needs be, to indulge in ourselves such a disposition of spirit, or so to shape our course, that both shall lie counter to the divine counsels in all this. That is, when Christ did not come into the world by accident, but by design and by purpose, according to the wisest counsel, and eternal and most stable counsel, we should set ourselves, as much as in us is, to overturn the whole frame of that divine and eternal counsel of heaven; that is, that it shall never take place with me, "I will never be subject to him, I will never know him, never come into union with him, never resign up myself unto him; I will be mine own still, and live still at the utmost distance from God and defiance of him." By how much the more apparent this was the product of the divine will according to counsel, so more fearful and horrid must be the wickedness that stands in direct opposition thereto.

LECTURE II.*

BUT now to go on with other particular propositions about the decrees of God.

7. That those terms of life and death for sinners, which God hath actually settled and published in his Gospel, those we may be sure he did intend and purpose should be the terms of life and death unto us. Whatsoever (as you have heard in the general propositions) God actually doth, we may be sure he intended and purposed to do. What he doth, he doth willingly when he doth it. No force can be put upon him; he never doth any thing against his will, and what he once willed he doth always will, for there can be with him no new will. Therefore, whereas he hath enacted and published such things as these to the world, as the terms of life and death to sinners; that whosoever believes shall be saved, but whosoever believeth not shall be damned; that he gave his only-begotten Son with that design, that they who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; that they that believed not, are condemned already: they that believe, have everlasting life; they that believe not, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on them: that sinners are to repent, that their sins may be blotted out; that they that repent shall not all alike perish; (Luke xiii. 3.) that the things that eye hath not seen, that the ear hath not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man to conceive, are all prepared for them that love God: (1 Cor. ii. 9.) but, they that love him not, that love not the Lord Jesus, are so many *anathema*, *accursed*, till he come; (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) that Christ shall be the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him; (Heb. v. 9.) but, that he shall come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son; (2 Thess. i. 8.) these, I say, being the declared terms of life and death to sinners, enacted and actually published to the world as such, these you may be sure God did intend and purpose should be such. His purpose was eternal, and a decree, as that word was explained. This is out of all question, that such terms of life or death to sinners as have been mentioned, are the matter of divine, eternal decree; he did always intend they should be so. Whence it is obvious to collect, that he can have no contrary decree, no contrary purpose. That is, wheresoever his pleasure is published and made known, so as to be capable to be understood about these matters, God will never deal with men upon other terms. There can be no repugnant purpose to any such purpose as this; that is to say, that he will save any whether they believe or no, or though they finally persist in obstinate infidelity and impenitency and rebellion against him to the last. It is never to be supposed, that he will do such a thing without decreeing it, so that he should have ever decreed it against such a decree as this. And so, on the other hand, that he will ever finally condemn, or hath ever decreed or purposed finally to condemn, any that shall believe, that shall repent, that shall love him above all, and finally subject themselves to his government, whensoever they are brought to do so in Christ: therefore, it is vain and unscriptural, without foundation any way, for men to embolden themselves on the one hand, "Let me be never so wicked, or never so careless, I may be saved at last for all that; I do not know but God hath decreed to save me." Or, that any should torment themselves on the other hand with afflicting thoughts, "Let me do what I will, if I never so earnestly set myself, and seek help from heaven, that I may believe, that I may repent, that I may have my heart changed, renewed, and brought to love God, and subject myself to him in Christ, yet, there may be a decree against me, and I may perish for all this." There is no reason, no foundation on the one hand or on the other, for any such imagined decree of God, against these plain declared decrees of his; they are (as to what is compendious and comprehensive of all) final believers who lie under the decree or purpose of salvation; and final infidels who lie under the decree or purpose of condemnation.

So much, in general, is most certainly decreed, that they who believe shall be saved, and they that believe not, shall perish. But I further add,

8. God hath not purposed this in the general, that he will save such as are wrought up to a compliance with his declared known terms of salvation; but whensoever he doth actually enable any to believe and repent, we may conclude that he did eternally intend so to do. And whosoever he doth actually conserve in a safe state, that is, enables them continually to believe, (it is enough to instance in this one thing, with which the rest are so essentially connected, that they are all implied, if this one be actually to be found, and even in the very mention of this one,) if he actually enable any to believe to the saving of their souls unto their final salvation, he did always from eternity intend so to enable them. And so, he hath not only decreed, or intended certain indefinite and undeterminate species to life and salvation, but particular persons, as is most evident many ways.

(1.) Scripture is most express in it; if you look to the foregoing verses, divers of them in this same chapter, you will find it. In what a transport, towards the beginning, do you find the apostle blessing God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed *us* with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, (or things,) in Christ. According as he hath chosen *us* in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unblamable before him in love; having predestinated *us* to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself; according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." And in this same 11th verse, where the text lies, "in whom also *we* have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." And nothing, again, can be plainer, than that known and famous text, Rom. viii. 30. "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This is a chain that can never be broken; and equally expresseth that in the 2 Thess. ii. 13. where the apostle gives solemn thanks, even for them, that God had chosen *them* unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. And in that, 1 Pet. i. 2. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." These (as it is observable, and was told you before, in those more general propositions) do manifestly connect means and end together. But they do ascertain both, concerning some, and not leave the matter indefinite and undetermined, as if he did in the dark make and form purposes with himself, without discerning, at the same time, who should comply with his pleasure, as to such terms of life, and who should not. And besides so express scriptures, the matter is,

(2.) Evident in itself, that whomsoever he doth actually enable to comply with such terms of life and salvation, he did purpose and decree to enable. For when he doth so, when he gives a man faith, when he gives him repentance, which are most expressly said to be the gift of God: to you it is given to believe and suffer; (Phil. i. 29.) and Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, Acts v. 31. I say, when he doth actually give these gifts, doth he give them with his will, or against his will? Is it to be supposed, that he should give them, and not will to give them? What could so impose upon him that he should give what he was not willing to give? But, if once he was willing, and if then he was willing to give such a gift, he was always willing; for there cannot be with him a new will, and therefore he was from eternity willing. And again,

(3.) That matter might be further argued, from what Scripture speaketh most expressly too, that as to that great and most comprehensive instance of faith in the Son of God; whosoever do receive Christ and believe in his name, when God enables them so to do, he regenerates them; "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name," John i. 12. And then, it is immediately subjoined in the 13th verse, "Who were born not

* Preached January 8th, 1692.

of flesh nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." But if he do regenerate any, he doth it most willingly: "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth," James i. 18. Agreeable to the expression in the text, "He doth all things according to the counsel of his own will." He did with counsel will to regenerate whomsoever he regenerates. And,

(4.) It is altogether unimaginable, that God should do a thing so far exceeding all expectation, and even all wonder, as the sending of his own Son; he that was the brightness of his own glory, and the express image of his person, the Heir of all things, by whom he made the worlds; to be incarnate, to put on man, and to die upon a tree, so ignominiously, a spectacle to angels and men; and to leave it an undetermined thing whether any should be the better for it, yea, or no; or rather, to leave it certain that none ever should be the better for it. For most certain it is, that as to those great terms of life and salvation, none can ever be the better, if he do not, by his overpowering grace, influence minds and hearts, and work them up to a compliance with those terms, and work and effect them in them. The case is vastly different in respect to spiritual good, and in reference to the opposite evil; where, as to wicked actions, and a continued course of them, or any particular act in such and such circumstances, men will always determine themselves; they are apt and prone enough to do so. If they can, in such circumstances, they will do wickedly; but in reference to any spiritual action that is good and holy, and of a saving tendency, there is not so much of an indifferency, but a most fixed aversion, which nothing but the power of divine grace can conquer and overcome. Nothing but the almighty power of grace can make an enemy-heart become friendly towards God and towards his Christ, can vanquish the malignity of an obstinate infidelity, can mollify an obdurate, hard heart, and make it dissolve and melt as in repentance it must. *This is*, therefore, altogether an unimaginable thing, that God should do what did so far exceed all expectation, and even all wonder, as to send his own eternal Son, to *die upon a cross*, and leave it uncertain whether any should ever be the better for it, or rather, certain that none ever should. And it is again,

(5.) Very unreasonable to think that the great God should have among men no objects of special favour; and it were foolish to suppose that it should be a reflection upon him to have it so. As it was formerly told you, it belongs only to a good governor, and even to the best that can be supposed, to deal equally with all, and kindly and favourably where he pleaseth. We are to distinguish matters of right, and matters of peculiar favour. Matters of right will be dispensed and administered with an equal hand, matters of special favour according to good pleasure, as it is expressed again and again, in the context. And plain it is, that there can be no natural right, which any creature can claim at the hand of God. Whatsoever becomes matter of right, from him to them, must only be by grace, by promise. He cannot be a debtor to his creature, till he makes himself so: and the promises by which he makes himself so, they "are all yea and amen in Christ;" (2 Cor. i. 20.) only upon his account, only for his sake. Whatsoever there is that comes within the compass of a promise, for the encouragement of sinners to return and come to God, it will all be made good to a tittle upon his account that is worthy, all promises being "yea and amen" in him. But whatsoever is above promise, more than promise, is all from mere εὐδοκία, the *good pleasure* of his goodness. It can be resolved into nothing else, turn we the matter in our thoughts never so long. He will make good all that was promised to every one to a tittle; all unpromised, peculiar favour, that is dispensed according to the good pleasure of his goodness; even as his promises themselves at first were. And,

(6.) Lastly, It is very evident, that as to communications of grace and favour, God doth dispense very differently; and therefore, must be understood to intend so to do, and to have always intended it. As in the parable of the *talents*, (though parabolical scriptures do not give ground of argument as to every thing in them, yet they do as to their main scope,) he gives to one ten talents, to another *five*, to another one, as he pleaseth; he dispenseth as he pleaseth, wherein he hath not particularly obliged himself. But further,

9. If yet he do actually, in a way of common grace, superadd more, wheresoever he hath given any thing of it, upon the due improvement of that, then we may conclude he hath always intended so to do; this was his pleasure, and his eternal purpose. If that be actually his rule, "to him that hath shall be given," (you know how *hath* is to be taken here, that hath so as to improve what he hath,) he shall still have more; if this be actually the rule and measure of his proceedings, it was always his purpose it should be so. And so it must be understood to have been his purpose, even in them that do finally perish, yet still to give them more of gracious communications in the way of common grace, upon the improvement of what they had; and they perish as not improving what was vouchsafed and afforded them, according to the tenor of that rule. They do not finally perish, as never having received any thing from the hands of God, in a way of grace, that had a tendency and leadingness in it to their better state, but they finally perish as neglecting and resisting such overtures as have been made to them. What the case was with the old world, before the flood, we must still suppose to be the common case among men. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," Gen. vi. 3. It had been striving, and it is generally striving more or less; and especially where God doth afford the more peculiar manifestations of himself, as he did to that people whom he severed from the rest of the world, to be more appropriate to him. We have many passages that speak of the presence and of the operations of the Divine Spirit, among that people. The Spirit of the Lord caused them to rest: He gave his Spirit to instruct them, Isaiah lxiii. 14. They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore, he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them: ver. 10. and that of dying Stephen, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and life, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do ye," Acts vii. 51. Now, there cannot be a resistance where there is no striving, and there can be no striving where there is not a counter-striving. When the Spirit, in its more common operation, is resisted, it retires in displeasure, often and most righteously, and gives to men, yields to them, that victory that shall be in the end fatal to them, undoing to them; many such victories undo them at last, and they perish by them. If he be actually working in men to will and to do of his own good pleasure, when he is ever so at work in any, he injects thoughts into their hearts, smites their minds with convictions, and their hearts many times with terrors; or if there be any more placid affections raised in them in any degree towards himself, or towards any divine thing, and the matter go no further than a loseable taste, that may vanish and pass away, it is plain he so far went of good pleasure; and if he did that which he did of good pleasure, then it was before his good pleasure, and always his good pleasure, and eternally his good pleasure, to proceed so far with such and such; so as in this case there can be no pretence to say, if he go no higher, that wrong is done to them with whom he went no higher. It must be justly said, "Friend, I do thee no wrong," even to the most careless neglecter and the most contemptuous abuser of the grace of God, "Friend, I do thee no wrong." If he do proceed higher, and to less vincible workings with some, there is no cause any man's eye should be evil, because his eye is good. He is Lord of his own grace, he may do what he will with his own. What he hath to dispense and dispose of, is his, and they to whom he is to dispose so and so are his, and there is no pretence of wrong to any, that more is not done for them, for whom more was done than they could lay any original claim to; for it was all of mercy that there was any offer or overture made at all, or that the case was so stated before, as that it might have been possible, if it had not been through their own wicked neglect, that they that perish might have advanced in the way of salvation, according to his method, still further and further, so as not to make their own final salvation a thing impossible upon any other terms, than their own wilful neglect and final refusal. But I again further add,

10. That such as live quite without the sound of the Gospel, and to whom every thing of supernatural revela-

tion hath never been vouchsafed or any thing of it, how God hath determined to deal with them, and the infants of such, he hath not yet declared further his pleasure to us expressly, than it was needful for us to know and understand. And therefore, it would be either vain or over-bold curiosity to determine positively in their case, and it is very unreasonable and foolish, over-solicitously to inquire about it. It is enough for us to understand and know upon what terms God will deal with us, according to those circumstances wherein he hath placed and set us; he hath placed us under the dispensation of his Gospel, wherein all things are made plain and evident to us, that concern us in reference to our present and eternal state, and will deal with us according to those known and published terms, which stand in so clear a light before our eyes; and with all others according to those measures they have had. It is enough for us to understand and know what we may, as our case is stated, expect from God, and what God doth expect from us. And it would be very unreasonable, and uncharitable, for us to trouble ourselves with further inquiries, and it would be very bold to venture on rash determinations, in those more obscure things, and wherein we are so little concerned. These are to pass among the arcana, that secret things belong to God, when revealed things belong to us, and our children after us, as they shall come to be revealed to them, Deut. xxix. 29. A passage placed, as it were, on purpose to caution and warn too busy and bold inquirers, and that, even in matters of unspeakably less concernment than the eternal salvation of souls. As suppose, that the people, for that is the case there supposed and referred to, who had been so peculiar to God, taken nigh to him, above, and from, all other people and nations under heaven, should apostatize and revolt from him, and draw down vindictive judgments, and destructive ones, upon themselves, and inquiry be made how it comes to pass, that such a people, so near to God, should be so treated and dealt withal, their land laid waste and made a wilderness, and nothing to be found but marks of divine vengeance, where such a people, so favoured by heaven, did dwell, what is the meaning of all this? Why, they forsook the Lord their God! But that might have been prevented. Why did he not hold them to him? "Secret things belong unto God, but revealed things to us and our children." So is that sad and dismal state concluded and shut up at last, with that seal upon it! That, therefore, I would leave with you, as all I think needful to say, with reference to their case who lie without the compass of superadded divine revelation. Again I further add,

11. That whereas faith and its concomitants are ever to be found in that, which appears to be at length the subject of God's purpose of saving souls; and final infidelity, with its concomitants, are the characters of the subjects of the contrary purpose, a purpose to condemn with everlasting destruction; these must very differently be understood to be so. Faith, for instance, and so of the rest of its concomitants, are never looked upon by God as any causes, or conditions, or inducements, any way, of his purpose to save any. These are by his grace to be found in the subjects, in those that he will save; but they are no inducements to pass any such determination concerning them. It is honourable to him to save such: and, even in the nature of the thing, they only are capable of final salvation and blessedness, in whom such characters are to be found: for they can never be happy in union with the eternal truth and goodness, who are habitually averse in their temper, and opposite to the one and the other. If happiness result from such a union, then they, in whom there is a prevailing final aversion to eternal truth and goodness, are incapable of any such felicity, as is to result from a union with these. But it is no motive or inducement to God, to intend to save such a one, because he will be a believer, or he will be a penitent person. That he is a believer, that he is a penitent person, that he is a lover of him, and that he is obedient to his Son, these are the effects of his grace, and of his good pleasure, and so he is moved in this case by nothing without himself. But the case must be understood to be otherwise, as to those that he intends finally to punish, and to punish with everlasting destruction. That is, he doth resolve to deal with them suitably to the state of things between him and them, and with himself. If any require, why there should be a difference, why he should be moved to purpose so and so, in reference to them that perish, (which purpose we are not to consider abstractly as it lies in God alone, for so it is not a distinct thing from his own essence, of which there can be no cause; but we are to consider it with a reference to the effects and to the objects, and of that relation there is really a cause, and so there is a just cause, for the condemnation of them that perish, even from the creature; but there can be no cause from the creature, of them that are saved,) I say, if you will have the reasons assigned of the difference, they are obvious and plain, especially these two.

(1.) That there is no natural connexion between the imperfect faith and holiness of the saints, and their eternal felicity; no natural connexion, I say, at all between them. But there is a most natural connexion between the infidelity, enmity against God, and reigning wickedness, and eternal ruin and everlasting misery. No man can say that these two are naturally connected, an imperfect faith in God, through Christ, and imperfect holiness, and final felicity and blessedness. These are not so naturally connected that the one must arrive to the other. But there is a most plain, natural connexion between infidelity and disbelief of divine truth, enmity against divine goodness, repudiation and refusal of the offers and tenders thereof, and eternal misery; so as that the one of them cannot but be the other. Wickedness must be misery, sin persisted in to the last must be destruction, it cannot be otherwise; sin when it is finished can be nothing but death. "To be carnally minded is death:" it is indeed said, "to be spiritually minded is life and peace;" but that is by an intervening divine constitution. And though there be a constitution in the other case too, yet there is a most natural connexion between total prevailing wickedness, reigning iniquity, and misery; to which the supervening constitution is added to an indication of the righteous judgment of God, that he doth but let the thing be with such as it is. They love death; and he only lets them have what they love, and what they choose: he doth only not interpose in their case to break the connexion. And,

(2.) There is this manifest difference too; that as there is a natural connexion between wickedness and misery, whereas there is none between imperfect faith and holiness and eternal felicity, otherwise than what God hath graciously made; so there is in final, reigning, persevering wickedness, the highest desert of eternal misery; whereas, there is in imperfect faith and holiness no desert of eternal life and blessedness. And none that consider, will think this strange, that when a man can never deserve (much less by what is merely gratuitously wrought in him) life and blessedness; yet, by continuing, persevering wickedness, he may deserve to perish. That imperfect good that is wrought in him, and which he owes not to himself, can never deserve life and blessedness, for him. But total wickedness, yea, or any wickedness, can deserve death, can deserve for a man's being left to be finally miserable, and his falling under divine *vindicta*, *vengeance*: this is a divine nemesis, what is fit and righteous, what is fit the righteous Judge of all the earth should do; even animadvert upon the wickedness, and testify his own just abhorrence and detestation of it, so that there is a vast difference between these two: that though faith and holiness be in those that shall be saved, and so are ever to be found in the subject of God's purpose to save, as characteristical of the subject, but are not inducements, or causes or motives thereof unto God; yet, wheresoever God has purposed to condemn, their wickedness is a just motive of that purpose, so terminated, so related to the creature, that is, to suffer, and to the suffering that he is to undergo. There is something justly causative in this; and there is nothing more strange in all this, than what God hath himself, in his word, so plainly told us, that men's destruction is of themselves, but their help in order to salvation should be found in him alone, Hos. xiii. 9. It is no unsuitable or strange thing, that God should be eyed as the Author of all life, and all grace, and all blessedness, and of life and of felicity for ever. And, that sinners should be looked upon as the fountains of all evil, and all darkness, and all impurity, and all misery to themselves only. God

must determine men only to that good by which they are to be led on gradually to a blessed, safe, and happy state. But to that evil that tends to ruin and final destruction, men have it in themselves to determine themselves. More is yet to be added to illustrate this.

LECTURE III.*

BUT before I proceed further, I think fit to premonish thus much, and declare to you, that I would not, as to these matters, be understood to deny every thing that I do not assert about them, nor to assert whatsoever I do not deny; for my design is only to propose to you what is plain, and what is useable and may be improved unto the common purposes of Christianity. There are a great many things besides, that many have concerned themselves to dispute to and fro, which I think it not at all needful or useful to be brought into such discourse.

But now, that the matter last insisted on may yet be clearer and more plain. If we speak of this natural bodily life, you can very easily understand that that is in any man's power, it is within the compass of human power that ordinarily men have, for a man to give himself a mortal wound, but, having done so, it is not within the compass of human power to heal him again; and that, in reference to the natural connexion between the one of those forementioned things and the other, and in reference to the moral and legal connexion that is asserted between them; we may again illustrate it by resemblance of it to the concernments of this natural bodily life. It is in the power of any one that dares venture to be so far criminal, to deserve death at the hands of the prince and the law, whereas, it may be no way in his power, when he hath done so, to deserve the prince's pardon, and to have his forfeited life given him again. These are things, in themselves, plain to any understanding. And now, whereas the text hath plainly told us, that God works all things after the counsel of his own will, this doth manifestly imply, that the determinations must be correspondent to the aptitudes of things, and most especially to the apt agreement which they shall hold with the universal perfection of his own nature. Now it is no blemish to the perfection of the Divine nature, when things are so and so connected in themselves, naturally and morally, to let things in many instances stand just as in themselves they are. This is no reflection on the divine perfection; that is, where there is a real connexion between wickedness and misery, both natural and moral or legal, it is no reflection upon the perfection of the Divine nature, in many instances to let that connexion be as it is. And whereas, there is no connexion between imperfect faith and holiness, and perfect felicity and blessedness, (there is, in reality, no connexion between these,) it is no blemish to the divine perfection (if there be really, and if there be in nature, and as yet any other way between these two, no connexion) to make one by grace, in what instances he pleaseth; that being done as the Gospel tells us) upon the Redeemer's account, who was predetermined should so order the course of his management, even to dying itself, and in dying, that no divine perfection should reluctate or reclaim against such a connexion as this; a connexion to be made by grace, when before it was not, when really it was not, between that imperfect faith and holiness that some should be enabled to in this world, and their future felicity and blessedness in the other world. All comes to this sum, that that we can both effect and deserve our own death and misery; but we can neither effect nor deserve life and blessedness: that must be owing to divine favour and grace. And the case (as hath been often said) is vastly different in dispensing of punishments and free favours. being no reflection upon the best government that can be supposed, either to inflict deserved punishments, or to dispense undeserved favours. Neither of these can reflect on the best and most perfect government that can be thought. I now go on, and add further,

12. That the assertion of a decree of reprobation, antecedent to a decree of condemnation for infidelity and wickedness persisted in to the last, is that which may seem agreeable to the imperfect mind of man; but we cannot be so sure that it will be any way agreeable unto the most perfect mind of God, in which there can be no such thing as first and second, and unto which all things lie open at once, even unto one entire and eternal view. We are very plainly told in Scripture, of some men's being ordained of old unto condemnation, in that 4th verse of the epistle of Jude; and in the same place we have the characters given us of them that are so: "ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." We are sure of such a decree as doth doom such, continuing such unto the last, unto condemnation and eternal perdition: but that there should be any decree concerning such, prior to this, that must suppose priority and posteriority *in eternum*. But *eternum non patitur novum, there can be no such thing as novity, newness, in eternity.* And therefore, being sure there is such a decree as this, and that this decree is eternal, we may be equally sure there can be no decree pre-existent to it; because every thing in God is co-eternal to him, and so this decree must be co-eternal unto God himself; and there can be nothing before God. And though it be very true, indeed, that many have taken much pains and given great exercise to their thoughts to assign and fix some certain order of former and latter, to the divine decrees, yet that doth only proceed from the imperfection of their minds; but we are sure it is impossible there can be any such thing as priority and posteriority in the Divine Mind; all things lying open to him at one eternal and entire view at once; so that whensoever he beholds and looks upon the subjects of final misery, he sees their character at the same time, and it cannot be otherwise. And again, I add,

13. That will, or decree, or purpose of God, by which he doth determine the salvation of any, it is, in the proper time and season, effective of whatsoever is pre-requisite thereunto: that is, if he have decreed he will save such and such, that same will of his is, in the proper season, effective of that faith, of that repentance, of that holiness, and of that perseverance which is requisite to their final salvation. But, on the other hand, God's will to punish any with future misery is not effective of what concurs to that, neither as naturally causing or deserving it. That is sin that doth both as you have heard; it doth both naturally cause it and deserve it too. And, if you ask here, "what is the reason of the difference; or is there not a parity of reason in both cases, that if his will doth effect what is necessary to the salvation of the one, his will should also effect what is necessary or doth any ways previously concur to the destruction of the other? The reason of the difference is most manifest upon these two accounts.

(1.) That sin is properly, as such, no effect, but a defect, and therefore, it doth not need an effective cause, but a defective only. But we will impute nothing of defectiveness to God; that can be found no where but in the creature. And,

(2.) That we can (sure any one may) apprehend it a great deal more congruous and suitable to the nature and honour of God, to make men believing and holy than to make them unbelieving and wicked. We can easily apprehend how well it agrees to the nature of God, and how subservient it is to the glory of God, to make men believing and holy; but no man can ever apprehend it agreeable to his nature, or subservient to his honour, to make men disbelieving and wicked. And therefore, as we make the difference, I cannot but apprehend you see reason enough why we should. And then further, take this,

14. That for these distinct states of blessedness and misery, unto which the will of God doth determine some, and leave others, they are the only states of men hereafter, and there is not a middle state between these two, though there be great intermediate degrees between the highest pitch of felicity and the lowest of misery. There are, I say, very great intermediate degrees, but not a middle state. This proposition hath two parts:—that there is no middle state, and yet—that there are great intermediate degrees, both of blessedness and misery.

* Preached January 15th, 1692.

(1.) As to the former part, that there is no intermediate or middle state between these two: it cannot, without very great absurdity, be so much as conceived there should be; besides that it is against the most express tenor of Scripture. I need not go about to quote texts to you. Look to the judgment of the great day, Matt. xxv. Men are judged but to two distinct states; all go one of these two ways. And it is unconceivable in itself that there should be a distinct intermediate state: for it would be to suppose that there can be such a thing as an intelligent, reasonable creature, having the use of his faculties, (which death, we have a great deal more reason to apprehend, doth promote rather than hinder,) and neither happy nor miserable. This is an unconceivable thing, equally unconceivable as it would be that there should be such a creature under a law, under government, (as reasonable creatures even as such, either possitive or natural at least,) that should be neither good nor bad, that should neither be obedient nor disobedient, holy nor wicked, and this you know to be an impossible thing. And that is enough as to the former part of the proposition. But then,

(2.) As to the latter part, that there are great intermediate degrees both of happiness and misery, that is plain from most express Scriptures. It is less needful to insist upon the degrees of blessedness in the other state, about which the Scripture is plain enough. There will be such a difference as there appears to be of one star differing from another star in glory, I Cor. xv. 41. But chiefly as to the differing degrees of misery; nothing is plainer from such passages in Scripture:—"They that know their master's will, and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; they that do it not, not knowing it, with fewer," Luke xii. 47, 48. "It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for Capernaum and Bethsaida, where so much Gospel light shone, and where so glorious works were done, to evidence and demonstrate the truth of the Gospel," Matt. xi. 22. And there is a sort among them that do perish, which do perish more dreadfully. Such and such, it is said, shall have their portion with hypocrites, (Matt. xxiv. 51.) which must be supposed the most fiery, in the worst and hottest hell. God will not lay upon men more than is right, that any should enter into judgment with him, as the expression in Job is. And therefore, we must suppose the case to be vastly different between them that live under the Gospel and them that do not. "They that sin without law, shall perish without law;" (Rom. ii. 12.) but with a gentler kind of perdition. But they that sin under the law, that is, under the divine revelation, for that is the meaning of the law there, supernatural, divine revelation, they shall be judged by it: not by that light which they have not, or those means of light which they never had, but by those which they have. But whereas, there will be very great degrees of difference in the states of the miserable hereafter, how great that difference will be, that we know not. It is enough that we know it will be very great; and therefore, among them that are miserable, none will be punished unsuitably to the demerit of their own sins. And this ought to have its weight with us, in order to the repressing of undue and hard thoughts concerning the divine proceedings with men in the final judgment: and so, concerning his purposes and determinations before, and from, eternity.

But I think it not necessary to say more to you by way of position; yet, there are sundry things that I shall add by way of *caution*. As,

1. That we should take heed of being too positive about any of these things, beyond the measure of divine revelation, or too curious in inquiring, or too contentious in disputing about such matters. Let us labour to lay a restraint upon our spirits as to these things. The matter requires it, and the divine word requires it.

2. Never depart from, nor doubt of, what God hath expressly revealed: in reference to what he hath expressly revealed, let us neither deviate nor doubt; but take heed lest we do. And,

3. Take heed that we do not oppose the secret and revealed will of God to one another, or allow ourselves so much as to imagine an opposition, or contrariety between them. And that ground being once firmly laid and stuck to, as it is impossible that there can be a will against a will in God, or that he can be divided from himself, or against himself, or that he should reveal any thing to us as his will that is not his will, (it being a thing inconsistent with his nature, and impossible to him to lie,) that being, I say, firmly laid, (as nothing can be firmer or surer than that,) then measure all your conceptions of the secret will of God, by his revealed will, about which you may be sure. But never measure your conceptions of his revealed will by his secret will; that is, by what you may imagine concerning that. For you can but imagine while it is secret, and so far as it is unrevealed.

4. Take heed of exalting any one divine perfection to the depressing of another, which men are too prone to do in their more fervent disputes about these matters. Great heat and zeal appear to vindicate such a particular divine perfection, without attending, that at the same time they intrench upon some other. It were very easy to give instances. Some on the one hand are so much for the magnifying of the goodness of God, his love and his justice, (as they think,) that they quite overlook his sovereignty, make nothing of that, but guide their thoughts by such measures, as if they thought that God was obliged by his goodness, or even by his justice, to do so with his own creatures, whom he hath so freely produced and brought forth into being out of nothing, as they may do with their fellow-creatures. As if God were bound to observe the same measures as they do, and had no more power and dominion over the works of his own hands, than they have over one another, who cannot give one another so much as a moment's breath. And on the other hand, some are so over-apt to exalt and magnify the divine sovereignty, that they quite forget to consider him as a wise, and righteous, and holy, and good God; in all these, the best and most perfect of beings. This is quite forgot, and scarce any other notion doth actually obtain; though otherwise these are not denied, are only not denied; but in the mean time they are overlooked; and so hardly any other notion is brought in view, or upon the stage, concerning God, than as of an almighty will; quite against the manifest scope and current of the Scripture every where, which makes all excellencies to be in him, and magnifies his wisdom, and his righteousness, and his love and goodness, at so high a rate, as you know. But to suppose the Divine nature to consist but in an omnipotent will, not guided by wisdom and counsel, as the text speaks, "He doth all things according to the counsel of his own will," is the strangest and most unshapen notion of God; and, in the tendency of it, most destructive to religion that can be conceived. It tends, indeed, to ingenerate in the minds of men a certain dread and horror: but is that the affection that is to influence religion, and to animate our worship? There can be no worship that doth not proceed from a dutiful reverential love; and agreeable hereunto must be still our notions of God. Heathens themselves, that speak at so high a rate (some of them) of the divine excellencies, and particularly of his goodness, exalting that far above his power, and above his knowledge, and above his wisdom; yet they, at the same time, say of him, "He is an impartial law:" and they comprehend in that, both goodness and righteousness, according to the strict measures whereof he manageth the whole course of his dispensation towards his creatures, and cannot but do so. He is a law that equally inclines every way, an impartial law he is to himself in all his dispensations. And indeed, such love and goodness in a ruler, as should include in it an insensibleness of injuries, and indignities, and affronts, it were stupidity; it were inconsistent with the proper governing qualifications which are requisite in any ruler whatsoever. And again,

5. Take this further by way of caution: Let us take very great heed that we do not, in reference to these things, so magnify human perfection as to depress divine: for that, in this affair, too many are apt to do; that is, to ascribe so much to the reason and will of man, as to detract most injuriously from the counsel of the will of God. Some think they know not how to solve the difficulties in these affairs, without ascribing greatly and highly to the reason and will of man. And all ought to be ascribed thereunto that is due; that is, so much as doth render a

man a governable creature, capable of being bound by a law, and of being dealt with in the way of moral government. So much must be ascribed and ought to be so. It would be otherwise as fit and congruous to have given laws, and assigned rewards and punishments, to beasts and trees, as men, if we do not preserve the apprehension of man's capacity to be the subject of government, by reason and will, wherewith God hath endowed his nature. But to think that the reason and will of man are, of themselves, enough to enable him to all that is requisite to his future felicity, is to make a god of him, instead of a man, and to put him into his Maker's throne, to give him a self-sufficiency, as if he had enough in himself to do all things. And this, indeed, is so to magnify the reason and will of man, as upon the matter to nullify the council of the divine will in reference unto him; by which we find the methods are described and set, in which he is to expect continual aids and assistances, as being of himself, without them, able to do nothing. And,

6. Take heed, hereupon, of being tempted to take up with a spiritless religion, that shall be only a human product, the effect only of a man's own power. Take heed of taking up such a repentance, and such a faith, and such an obedience as the power of man is sufficient for: that will certainly lurch men at last. That repentance, and that faith, and that holiness, (if any other were to have the names,) which is not produced by the Divine Spirit, but is short of that, must needs leave men short of heaven and eternal glory; unless you would suppose it possible to make a man to be his own Saviour out of such a gulf of sin and misery as men are sunk into.

7. Take heed of admitting any distrustful thoughts, that God will not be always ready to afford his communicated, superadded light and influence to those that see and acknowledge their own impotency and nothingness. Such as see themselves lost, and unable to help themselves, and that, from a sense of indigency and want, cry for his Spirit (even as for bread) to enlighten them and empower them, and enable them to do his will, to comply with his call, and come up to his terms of life and blessedness: take heed of ever admitting a distrustful thought concerning his readiness to impart and communicate to such. He will give his Spirit to them that ask him; when he is considerately asked and sought to; not formally, not slightly, not in words of course; but as feeling our own blindness, and darkness, and deadness, and impotency: or where there is not, as yet, the light of a saint, there is that of a man, and that is to be improved and made use of, in order to our higher light, and if there be that self-reflection to which God hath given to every man, a natural ability, much more may be known than usually is. It belongs to the nature of man to turn his eyes inwards. The mind of man, (like the sun, can only project its beams and cast them about this way and that, and every way,) the mind of a man, I say, as an intellectual sun, can turn its beams inward upon itself, and take cognizance of what is done within him, and what dispositions and indispositions are within. Men can reflect and consider this with themselves: Have not I an aversion towards God? have not worldly concernments and affairs, by the natural inclination of my own mind, a greater room and place there than heaven and the things of heaven? are not other thoughts more grateful? and have they not a more pleasant relish with me than the thoughts of God?[1] Men, I say, are capable of using such reflections as these. And thereupon, of considering, This can never be well with me: if there remain with me an habitual aversion to God, who must be my best and eternal good, I cannot but be eternally miserable: if I cannot think of him and converse with him with inclination and pleasure, I am lost. If my blessedness lie above, in another world, and my mind is carried continually downward towards this world, I must have a heart attempered for heaven, or I can never come there. Well then, let me try if I can change the habit of my own mind, make the attempt, make the trial." The more you attempt and try, the more you will find that of yourselves you cannot; you can do nothing of yourselves, you do but lift at a heavy log, you attempt to move a mountain upwards, when you would lift at your own terrene hearts. Then is this consideration obvious, "I must have help from heaven, or I shall never come there." Therefore fall a seeking, fall a supplicating, as one that apprehends himself in danger to perish and be lost, if he have not another heart, a believing heart, a holy heart, a heavenly heart. God will in this case give his Spirit; and of that, you are not to despair by any means. Take heed therefore of setting the imagination of a secret will of God not to give his Spirit, against his plain and most expressly revealed will, that he will give his Spirit to them that ask it, that is, that do considerately ask it, as apprehending the state of their case; not ask it slightly and in mockery, so as that the manner of their asking to have the Divine Spirit given should imply a contempt of the gift at the same time.

[1] Preached January 22nd, 1692.

LECTURE IV.*

AND I will add, further, to this caution, that we take very great heed that we do not remit either our diligence, or our hope, in reference to the affairs of our salvation, upon the supposition of any divine council or purpose lying against us; and to enforce this, (than which nothing is more necessary to be enforced,) I might reason two ways, partly *ad hominem*, partly *ad rem*.

(1.) *Ad hominem*. That is, from the common apprehension and practice of men in reference to other cases. It is very plain that all the other concernments of men are as much determined by divine counsel and decree, as the affairs and concerns of their souls and future estate. But it is as plain that men are not wont to suspend their actions, in common cases, upon mere supposition of such purposes and councils of God, that may, for aught they know, lie against them in such cases. It would make very strange work in the world if they should; if men should suspend their actions in reference to common affairs of human life, merely upon the supposition that a decree may be against them. What a condition would it reduce things to among men on earth! The whole world would be at a stand, or would be sitting still, and would sit still in very uneasy postures too. The husbandman must never plough nor sow, for he might say, "I do not know but there is a decree against me, that all will come to nothing, I shall have no crop, I shall lose all my labour and expense." The merchant should never send or go to sea; no man should ever make a meal, because he doth not know but that it may be determined that it shall poison and not nourish him, choke him and not refresh him. Men should not walk the streets, for they do not know but that there may be some decree or other that a tile shall fall and strike them dead, or they may meet with a stab in their walk: nor should they sit still in the house neither, for they do not know but that there may be such a decree that the house may fall and bury them in the ruins. Plain it is, men do not in common cases suspend their actions upon such suppositions; but then it argues very great insincerity, and a very ill temper of mind, that men should only pick out their weightiest and most important concerns, and do nothing in reference to them, merely upon such an imagination that there may be some purpose, or something in the divine council, lying against them. It argues, I say, a very ill mind; that there is some peculiar disaffection to God, and to the way of holiness and to religion as such, that men should only lay themselves under restraint in reference to those great concernments of religion, when they have as much cause, and the same pretence, in reference to all things as they have in reference to this. And again,

(2.) We may argue *ad rem*, or from the true, real state of the case itself; that is, that there is no supposable divine purpose but what is guided by counsel, and that no one hath any reason to fear that the divine counsel can be any way prejudicial to him, even to an honest affair or undertaking, that belongs to the human life itself. For they are always to be considered as the counsels of an absolutely, infinitely perfect Being, whose nature is incapable of any thing of malignity towards his creatures; (for it is the most

* Preached January 22nd, 1692.

perfect benignity and goodness itself, "God is love;") and therefore, that any supposable counsel of the divine will, in reference to our common affairs themselves, are a great deal more encouraging than they can be discouraging; yea, unspeakably more, in reference to these affairs, supposing we will but take up due thoughts of God, about them, and have correspondent, due dispositions of heart and spirit towards him: for we are pre-assured by his own express word, that all things shall work together for good to those that love God; which love will be the evidence of a man's being called according to his purpose, as these things lie connected in that Rom. viii. 28. There is no son or servant of common understanding and ingenuity, but it will be a very great encouragement and satisfaction to him to act in all things under the conduct and direction of a parent or master, that he knows to be a man of counsel, as well as of the greatest goodness; it will certainly be most satisfying and encouraging to any such one. And how unspeakably more will it be to any, to think, that whatsoever affairs that lie within the compass of human life, I have to manage, I am to manage and order them all under the conduct and direction of the wise counsel of a good, and gracious, and holy God; whence I may be sure he will never hinder me in any such enterprise and undertaking of mine, unless it appear to his infinite wisdom, that it will be to my hurt, that it will turn to my prejudice. If it shall be for the best for me, it shall succeed, if it shall not succeed, it would be to my disadvantage if it should. The tendency of all this is to compose men's spirits to the greatest quietude and tranquillity imaginable, in reference even to the common affairs of human life. This word is firmer and more stable than the foundations of heaven and earth, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God: nothing can come amiss to a lover of God, to one, who by the Divine Spirit working in him, is contempered in the habitual frame of his spirit to the divine pleasure. And the disposition of all things cannot but work together for good to such a one.

But whereas it may be said, "What if I do not love God? what if I find not that disposition in my heart and soul to him, what shall I do then?" Why,

[1.] I would appeal to such a one, How perverse a notion must you needs have of God, if you think him to be such a one that he should equally take care, that all things should work together for good to men, whether they love him or love him not! that he should as much gratify them that hate him, as them that love him! You must suppose, in this case, somewhat in its own nature impossible: for it is simply impossible that any thing can succeed well with a man that loves not God. He must be the son of peace, or good cannot come to him; it can take no place in him. But what I have further to say is this, which in the second place I designed to say in arguing this matter *ad rem*. That is,

[2.] That supposing a man be not a lover of God, an habitual lover of him, so he can discern this to be the predominant governing principle in him; yet he hath greater encouragement in reference to the affairs of his soul, (supposing them to lie in this state,) that he can have in reference to his external estate in this world. For do we ever find any such promises in the word of God, that whosoever labours to be rich shall be rich; or that he that takes care of his health shall be always healthy; as we have, that he that labours to be saved shall have help from heaven in order thereunto? "Work out you own salvation with fear and trembling, for God worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13. He is working: (for so the word signifies:) what he doth herein, he doth according to good pleasure, and he is still doing and working in you. Therefore, there can be no purpose or counsel in the divine will, lying against this plain word of his. So that none can have any pretence to be less laborious, less diligent in reference to the affairs of their souls, than they have in reference to their common affairs. Yea, there is a great deal of reason why they should be much more, and that they should conjoin hope with their diligence in reference thereunto; which I mention in this conjunction, because we find them so conjoined in Scripture; and they are conjoined in the nature of the thing. We find them conjoined, Heb. vi. 11. "That ye show the same diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises." And in the nature of the thing, there can be no diligence where there is no hope; where there is much of hope, there will be much of diligence. There is no reason that either should languish; there is the greatest reason why both should be lively and vigorous, and make each other so, even upon the supposition of what lies in the mind and purpose of God, in reference to the affairs of souls. And then, I further add, by way of caution,

8. That we do not overlook the advantages that may be made of agreements among them that do controvert this same thing. That is, the purposes and counsels of God touching the salvation of men, or touching the punishment of them who shall be found the fit subjects of his punitive justice in another state. Let us not overlook the advantage that may be made of what is in this matter agreed on all hands; that is, it is on all hands agreed, that no good man shall ever perish. This is a thing wherein all do consent and agree. And truly, what there is of difference, it is so very notional and little, in comparison of this, that here we have what should quiet our minds, yea, and it is further agreed, that for them that are wicked, they have always still means for making them better, more than ever they improve or make use of; and that God doth afford no such means to any unwillingly; therefore, always according to his will, and the counsel of his will; and consequently, that this must be found the case at last, that none do finally perish but such as have refused and rejected the overtures, or misimproved, or not improved, the means that they had in order to their being saved. Though they have not all at once what was necessary to the saving of them, they had always reason to apprehend, that if they had used what they had, they should have had still more. And such agreements as these are by no means to be overlooked. We should labour to make the greatest advantage of them that the matter admits of. Yea, and it is further agreed, that this world is very wicked; and it cannot but be agreed, that God could make it generally better if he would, and therefore, it ought to be as generally agreed, that he hath something in his wise counsel whence it doth appear to him less fit to exert his almightiness to this purpose. Or, if any should expect he should do so, or wonder he doth not so, they have as much reason to wonder why he did not, by almightiness, shut sin out of the world at first, and why he did not, by his almighty power, (as he might,) prevent the apostacy or fall, either of the angels that fell, or of the universality of men that fell all at once, and are all in a fallen state ever since.

I shall not further insist as to matter of useful caution which in these several particulars hath been given you, But I shall add, to these, some *alleviating considerations*, that may help to make things sit more easily on our minds, relating to this great and important subject. As,

1. Consider this, that all the purposes or determinations of the divine will, they are the products of counsel. That the text assures us, that whatsoever he doth, he doth according to the counsel of his own will, whereupon, as to the secret purposes and determinations of the divine will, which therefore we know not, because they are secret, we have all the reason imaginable to think, that they must be most unexceptionable, from that we do know, that they are all purposes guided by most unerring counsel, and which, whilst we know not in particular what they are, we have nothing to do but reverentially to adore, as the apostle doth in Rom. xi. 33. "O! the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." That part remains, to adore, with a dutiful adoration, what we do not distinctly and particularly understand, and, indeed, cannot understand. There is no government but hath its arcana and it would be very inept and foolish for us to imagine that there should be no secrets belonging to the divine government. But admit that there be, inasmuch as they do belong to the divine government, the government of God: that name is a name that comprehends all perfection, and excludes all imperfection; contains nothing in it but what is most excellent and perfect in all respects; and therefore, of this, in the general, we may rest most assured, that there

can be nothing exceptionable in those purposes of his will which we do not particularly know. And,

2. Let us but consider, that for his known and public counsels, they carry their own recommendableness in them to every mind, understanding, and conscience of man, that shall consider. Do but bethink yourselves, what is given us as the summary of the whole counsel of God which is published and declared to apostate, fallen man. The apostle tells the Ephesians, (Acts xx. 21.) that he had made it his business to testify to them "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." And in having done so, he tells them (ver. 27.) that he had made known to them the whole counsel of God. Now, I beseech you, what could have been more suitable to the state of apostate, fallen creatures, than to say, it is the counsel of God, they should repent, that they should turn to him. And since it was impossible they should return and be accepted, but upon the account of a Mediator and Redeemer who was to bring them to God, and reconcile them to him, what could be more suitable, than that this should be stood upon, wheresoever he is revealed and made known, that men should believe in him; that is, absolutely resign and subject themselves to his saving mercy, and to his governing power? Here is the whole counsel of God, here it is summed up. And what hath any man to say to this? why, being an apostate creature, he should not turn and repent? and why, not being able to satisfy divine justice by himself, but having one revealed to him that hath fully done it, (so as to leave that none of his part,) why he should not intrust his soul with him, and cast it upon him, and subject it to his conduct and government, by known and prescribed and most unexceptionable rules? And whereas, men cannot turn of themselves, (it is true,) they have not at present sufficient power in their own hand, it is all one, whether they have it, or may have it, if they do apply themselves. This is a part of the counsel of God too, that he is always ready to assist a returning soul: "Turn yet at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit upon you," Prov. i. 21. This is part of his counsel: for they that do not so, are, in the next verse, said to have set at nought his counsel: "But they have set at nought my counsel and despised all my reproof." How unexceptionable are the counsels that are made known, and that are published and declared to us! And,

3. Consider, that if this be the declared, published counsel of God, which you have heard, that he would have apostate creatures return, and is intent upon it that they should do so, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. xviii.) and is always assisting to their return,—"Turn ye at my reproof, apply yourselves, set about it, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you;" I say, if this be his declared, published counsel, we are sure there can by no repugnant, contrary secret counsel. There can be no contrariety between his declared and his secret counsel. It were monstrous idolatry, that we should form in our own minds, instead of a Deity, an apprehension that he is made up of repugnancies and inconsistencies with himself. And again,

4. Let us but consider, how things would lie under God's present view, supposing that we did not recur and run back into a foregoing eternity, supposing things to lie as they are in their present state, under the present and immediate view of God, only, without conceiving an eternal counsel and an eternal purpose concerning any such thing, and consider with yourselves how matters should lie then; that is, but thus, that whereas God hath such an order of creatures, intelligent creatures, inhabiting this world, who have all apostatized, fallen, and gone off from him, and by the natural tendency of their course, are universally running themselves into misery, and sinking lower and lower, ready to be ingulfed of endless and eternal misery; he beholds these from the throne of his glory above; he sends forth plain, general significations of the pity and compassion he hath towards his creatures; directs his invitations to all the ends of the earth to look to him that they may be saved: if the express revelation do not reach all, it is they themselves, through their own wickedness, that do obstruct and hinder the diffusion of it, otherwise the Gospel had spread and flown like lightning from one quarter and end of the world to another, many an age ago, and still from age to age; but yet, plain significations that God is not irreconcileable to his fallen creatures, are more or less afforded every where; he doth not leave himself without witness in that he doth men good; he is kind to them; doth not treat them as an implacable God; makes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon the evil and the good, as in that context we so lately discoursed of to you. He is secretly striving with them, as his Spirit strove with the old world before the flood. "My Spirit (saith God) shall not always strive with man:" implying, that it had been striving, even with that wicked world, before. And after the same rate he is dealing with men still. They despise the riches of his patience and goodness and long-suffering, many of them: suppose they do so more generally, he yet, by a merciful and more powerful hand, takes hold of some, and saith, (as it were,) "Though you are inclined and disposed all to perish alike, I will have a relict from among you out of the hand and power of the destroyer:" and he hath finally a numerous remnant; more than any tongue can number, as we find the matter represented how it will be in the close and period of things; we do not know how vastly numerous they may yet be, or have been in former ages and successions of time. But they that perish, perish by their own wilful refusal of offered mercy, whether more expressly, or whether by more tacit, yet intelligible inclinations. Let but things be considered now as lying before God, obvious to one present view, who hath any thing to say against God's method of procedure in this case? Who hath not cause to adore his grace and goodness and clemency in all this, though so great numbers finally perish? And then, how easy is the step further; if things to one present view do lie so very unexceptionably, what is there more of exception, supposing this view to have been eternal? If things be very fair thus, under one present view, will they lie worse, if it were a day earlier, or a month or a year earlier, or an age, or from eternity? What is itself right and well, is eternally so, and was eternally so, and can never have been otherwise. And therefore, it is very vain and foolish for men to amuse their minds, and affright themselves with the thoughts of future and eternal counsels, that may have lain this way or that; if things look well to a present view, how can they look worse to an eternal one? And again, consider,

5. That things should lie thus open to the eternal view of God, all at once, in all their dependencies and connexions and references to one another, certainly it is owing only to his perfections, that they should do so, and that they do so. Is it not a greater perfection to foresee and to foreknow all things, and to have forelaid all ones's designs, than to foreknow nothing before-hand? and to do nothing without foregoing, previous design? How unreasonable is it for us to think the worse of God for that he is more perfect! It is very unreasonable to suppose that he should not foreknow what will become of you and me in our eternal state; that he should not foreknow what the condition of that creature he hath made shall be to eternity. And whatsoever he doth actually make it to be, in point of felicity, by his own grace, or whatsoever he lets it be, in point of misery, by its own demerit, and the depraved inclination of its own nature, it is certainly his perfection to know the one and the other; and to do whatsoever he doth willingly and with design, not unwillingly, or as if he could be imposed upon, or forced in any thing. Do but seriously consider how unreasonable it is to think the worse, or have the blacker thoughts, of God, for that which is nothing else but his perfection. It would certainly be an imperfection to be nescient, and not to know what will become of things, and what will become of men; and so, to act incogitantly and without previous design, were a great imperfection. Is he then less fit to govern us, and to dispose of us and his creatures, for his being more perfect? And again,

6. Consider how things will lie in the judgment of the great day. We know the rule of his final procedure in that day, which is called "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," that he will give "eternal life to them that by patient continuance in well-doing seek for honour and glory and immortality; and indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to those that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness," Rom. ii. 5, 6. To none

but perverse and persevering evil-doers, none but such as refused to obey the truth and were contentious against it, and did obey unrighteousness, did give themselves up to the judgment of an unrighteous spirit and principle, ruling and working in them, to none else but these, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." If things will be very unexceptionable in the judgment of the great day, (as who can have any thing to say against this rule or this method of procedure,) he will then, in the judgment of the great day, both do as he purposed before, and his purpose will no way be found to have differed from the measure of his final procedure. And again consider,

7. That there cannot but a conviction go with the final issue of things, in the very souls and consciences of them that perish. They do foreknow the righteous judgment of God, that they that do such and such things are worthy of death, are worthy of misery. Pagans themselves do so, for to them the apostle speaks and refers in that Rom. i. in the close of the chapter. And what convictions will be upon the consciences of men in the final issue of thing, is sufficiently intimated in that, their principal sting is plainly enough and sufficiently intimated to be from their own consciences. There is the worm that never dies. And it were impossible this hold could be taken on the consciences of men, if it did not appear to them that they were finally guilty of their own ruin. All such imaginations must vanish and fly away of course, that it was impossible things should ever be otherwise with them than they are; that they were doomed unavoidably into that state into which they are come. Whatsoever might be a fence to keep off the stroke from their consciences, you must be sure will all vanish and be gone, and therefore, can have no place. And then lastly,

8. Consider the high and everlasting approbation that all God's methods will have with the most clarified, refined minds of angels and saints, in all that vast general assembly made up of "the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect;" all agreeing in admiring and applauding the most unexceptionable righteousness of all God's dispensations; whereof the counsel of his will were the measure: "Just and true are thy ways, marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty." And here will be no dark mind, no clouded understanding, no erroneous thought, no vitiating prejudice. If, therefore, we are sure all things will to eternity lie well and right to the most perfect minds and understandings, then they are righteous in themselves; and being in themselves right, they ought to be so estimated and judged of by us. Certainly, these things cannot be mistaken, cannot be mis-understood and mis-apprehended, by those pure and glorious creatures in the other state; those bright and unclouded minds, that will see nothing but loveliness and beauty, and what is most highly praiseworthy and admirable in the eternal view that they shall have of them. Therefore, to shut up all for the present, let me but leave these two words of direction.

(1.) Labour to cherish the love of God in your souls. That will commend to you all his counsels and all his methods. Love will never think amiss. And,

(2.) Form your apprehensions concerning him agreeably, that so you may have nothing in your minds to damp your love; nothing may disaffect you unto him. The understanding and the will (such is the constitution of the human nature) do interchangeably work upon one another: the more we love God, the better we shall think of him, and the better we think of him, the better we shall love him. These things circulate between one another. And nothing can be of higher and greater consequence: for if we do otherwise we shall cramp religion in ourselves: and so far as we propagate the ill sentiment, we shall hinder the propagating and diffusing of religion among others. And do but take this deeply to heart, (perhaps I may have more reason to speak to it hereafter,) that in the latter days wherein, it is said, religion must flourish in the world, (Hosea iii. 5.) men are to "fear the Lord and his goodness." Most certain it is, in those days, (if there are such days yet to come better than we have seen,) thus it must be, there must be a universal diffusion of good thoughts concerning God. This is that knowledge of God that must replenish the world, and fill the earth, and transform the minds of men, and overcome their fierce, savage humours and dispositions, their disaffection towards God and their barbarities towards one another; make them "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks." The revealed and acknowledged will of God, and goodness of God, prevailing against the evil of the mind and hearts of men. "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." Their thoughts and apprehensions of God will be so persuasive to their own hearts, and they will look upon him according to that kind and amiable and lovely representation of himself that shall captivate all minds and hearts; and make men hate nothing but themselves, and that they have not sooner and more loved God.

LECTURE V.*

THUS we have fully spoken to these words as they concern the spiritual and eternal state of men, which is the apostle's principal scope, as you may see, in the foregoing part of the chapter, and of the same verse; "having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," verse 5. And here, "according to the purpose of him that worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." But you see, that from that special consideration of the counsel or purpose of his own will, or the good pleasure theweof, the apostle makes a very easy, natural transition unto this more general proposition, which comprehends all that could be said, including the former in it, and much more. And therefore, having spoken to the more limited object already, of the counsel of the divine will, I shall proceed to speak somewhat of the counsel of God's will concerning the other affairs of men, besides those of their souls or of their eternal state.

And though it be very true that God's agency about all these outward concernments of men, do belong to another head of theology, that is, his providence; yet, the counsel of his will, according whereunto that agency is directed about these affairs, as well as those others that we have already spoken to, comes properly under our consideration here. And therefore, to that I shall speak somewhat briefly; to wit, the counsel of the divine will respecting the present concernments of men in the world, so far as it may be needful and useful to us; that so we may detract nothing from God, that doth truly and rightfully belong to him, and that we may not lose the advantage of the pleasant sentiments and relishes which we may have ourselves, and in our own spirits, from the right stating of this matter, which we shall, therefore, endeavour as much as in us is. And shall in speaking of it do these four things—speak of the extent of the object about which the counsel of the divine will is said to be conversant—of the counsel of the divine will itself, its nature and significancy in reference to that object or sort of objects that we are now to consider—give you briefly the reasons why we are to ascribe such a thing to God as counsel and purpose touching these affairs of ours, and—labour to show you, that no ill consequence can reasonably and justly be drawn from hence.

1. The extent of the object: sure we are not otherwise to circumscribe it than the letter of the text; WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS. For that special sort of object, the souls of men, and their spiritual and eternal state, we have spoken to already, which falls within the compass and comprehension, you plainly enough see, in the general expression in the text. And having spoken to that, even all other concernments besides we must understand to be within the compass of the object too: and therefore, that the counsel of the divine will is conversant about them; that is, whatsoever he hath any agency about, about that also the counsel of his will hath place, for "he worketh *all* things according to the counsel of his will." He doth nothing unwillingly, he wills nothing unadvisedly: there-

* Preached January 29th, 1692.

fore, whereas all things lie under his agency, all things lie under the counsel of his will.

More especially, whatsoever he hath made any law about; in reference to whatsoever he hath given us rules and precepts, these are called counsels often, and often in Scripture: they are the counsels and mandates of his will These all lie under the counsel of his will.

There is no state or condition that men can be in, in this world, but there are regulations and precepts given in reference thereto. Whatsoever is matter of threatening or of promise, the sanctions annexed to his precepts, (as there are many things of threatening and promise that are of temporal concernments,) these still must be considered as being within the same compass. Whatsoever may be matter of affliction or of comfort, whatsoever may have in it any thing of blessing, or any thing of cursing, (as there are temporal blessings and temporal curses besides the eternal ones,) all these we must understand to be consulted of, in the sense we formerly opened unto you, excluding all the imperfections, and including all the perfection that can be any way conceived or signified by it.

Moreover, all the private concernments of men, personal and domestic; the concernments of the world, of kingdoms and nations, political concernments; the concernments of the church of God in the world, which may be considered under the measure of time; they are all to be considered within the object of divine purpose and counsel.

The more private, personal, or domestic concernments of men; they belong to this object, and cannot be excluded. The time of every one's coming into this world, and the time of his going out of it; the "time to be born, and the time to die;" they lie under the determination of the divine counsel, directive of his will; even touching them, there is a time for every purpose under the sun. These, among the rest, "a time to be born and a time to die," Eccles. iii. 2. Skipping over (as it were) the intervening time, as if that were little worth the notice: yet only not noting it there, but in the mean time not excluding it neither, as is evincible enough from many other texts. But it is to be observed, (if you compare that with another passage in the same book, chap. viii. 6.) as to every purpose there belongs a season, so to every season there belongs judgment; to every purpose there is time and judgment. That must, undoubtedly, primarily, mean divine judgment, which is the perfection of counsel; that which with men is the result of counsel, and which therefore must signify somewhat analogous with God: there is the judgment of wisdom and counsel, that is determinative of every season, every time, for whatsoever purpose or occurrence that falls out to any of the sons of men. And the time between these two times, the time of their being born, and the time when they are to die; that lies under the same determination. His days and months and years are all set and appointed; as it is fully expressed in Job xiv. 6.

And so the conditions of men, while they are here in this world, whether they shall be high or low; whether they shall be rich or poor; every one hath his dimension, his allowance ordered for him; and no doubt therefore predordained. Whatsoever portion any man hath of the things of this life, whether it be more, or whether it be less, it is all given. Even what the ravens have, the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, it is all given; and much more what every man hath, is by the divine allowance and vouchsafement. To every living thing he gives what is convenient and suitable for the support of that life which he had given it before. But what he gives, he gives willingly, not against his will. And what he did once will, as you formerly heard,) he could not but ever will, and there can be no new one with him.

And how particular persons do branch into families; this all lies under the particular direction even of divine counsel and purpose. And so, what allotments such and such families shall have; and those as they multiply and to increase, "even unto nations and kingdoms," as you see, Acts xvii. 26. As God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth; so he hath determined the times of all, and appointed the very bounds of their habitations; assigned to every one his place where he shall be. It hath been the matter of the counsel of the divine will, even concerning us, that our lot should fall in such and such a part of the world; that we should dwell so much of our time in such a place; that our lot should be cast in England, or for so long a time in London; and in what circumstances and with what advantages one way or other. All these things, as they have been ordered by the great Lord of all, so they are not ordered by him incogitantly, but according to the eternal counsel and purpose that are understood to have passed concerning us. The very meanest things that can any way belong to us, or belong to this world, being expressly mentioned to come under the divine cognizance and care; it is plain such concernments as these cannot be excluded. As when we are told, all the hairs of our heads are numbered; and that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without our heavenly Father. And that is our Saviour's reasoning from hence, "Are not ye of more value than they, than many sparrows?" Now, if these things be the matter of the very care and agency of providence, they must have been the matter of an eternal purpose and counsel, for the reason again and again repeated before, that nothing can be new with God; no new thought, no new counsel or purpose.

And to consider to what particularities the divine eye and purpose do reach; what we find recorded and comes under our notice by way of history, that therefore must suppose there hath been an eternal view, even of the same things, and a purpose concerning them. As for instance, that which appears to be the most barren part of the Bible, that large account that we have of genealogy in Scripture; how should Moses possibly come to know through the successions of so many hundreds of years, even two thousand years before him, what children such and such men had, all those that are reckoned up, and how many years they lived? And it was thought fit that should be put down: and how such families were ranked, and what nations sprang from them; all these must needs have been matter of divine revelation, and therefore, were matter of divine knowledge, and therefore, were eternally so; all things being in the same order, under the divine eye, wherein they actually come to pass in the world.

So all the removes of men to and fro, here upon earth. "Thou tellest my wanderings," saith David; there is not a step taken this way or that, but all is under the divine direction and provision and purpose, that so and so it shall be.

And if you enlarge your thoughts further, to the concernments of former nations and kingdoms, collective bodies, they must be understood also to be within the compass of this object. The alterations in kingdoms; the seasons and intervals of rests and disturbances; of peace and of war, of plenty and of scarcity; of a prosperous and of an adverse posture of affairs, in respect of any, whatsoever, favourable providences or judgments that come upon these; these all lie under the counsel of the divine will. The revolutions of governments, when they are past, when they pass from form to form; God hath been pleased to give some more extraordinary proof and demonstration of his regency in these kingdoms, on purpose that it may be known (as Nebuchadnezzar, that great prince, was forced to confess) that God rules over the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whom he pleaseth, Dan. iv. 32. The Most High rules in the kingdom of men. It is not said kingdoms, importing this whole world to be one kingdom to him, one great monarchy; all lying under his imperial power. And all this must be understood to be according to counsel, and according to purposes that were with him eternally. For (as hath been said before) his being is so; *Et eternum non patitur novum; no new thing can fall out in eternity.*

And so, for the state of his church in general, or of particular churches upon earth; all their concernments, as they are such, they fall under the counsel of the divine will, which orders all their circumstances in reference to them; sometimes making their condition more prosperous and favourable, and sometimes more adverse, for trial and needful exercises of their graces, in these kinds wherein it is requisite such graces should have their exercises, which he hath adapted to such special purposes. So large (and for our thoughts, let them go as large and far as they

will or can) is the object about which the counsel of the divine will is conversant. But,

2. Something is to be said concerning the nature of such counsel and will, as it respects such an object; or this more special sort of object which I most intend in the present discourse. Why,

(1.) This is always to be held concerning the counsel of the divine will, that it is most perfectly wise; all things being in view to him at once, open to one eternal view in all their connexions, references, and dependancies; he having a thorough and everlasting perspection, even of all at once, of the things themselves and of their connexion with one another, even as they are connected, not because they are so, so as to pass from one connected thing to another, as we in our more imperfect way of knowing things are constrained to do. And,

(2.) The counsel of his will must therefore, hereupon, be immutable: being most perfectly wise, there can be no imaginable reason of any change. He never needs alter his measures: "Known to him are all his works from the beginning of the world," was that grave saying of the apostle James, in that synod at Jerusalem, Acts xv. 18. Whatsoever he hath to do, or doth do, that he designed to do; for he acts nothing casually: and what he did design to do, he did consult about, so far as consulting can have place with him: we explained the sense of it before, that is, that he hath perfect perspection of all that is requisite and fit to be done, and so did purpose according thereto, and then doth according to that purpose. And therefore, to consider, besides the nature of such a divine purpose and counsel, its reference and significancy to human affairs. I say,

(3.) This same counsel of the divine will, it is a measure to himself of all his own agency; what he will do, and what he will not do; how far he will exert his influence, and wherein he will suspend it; how he will direct it this way and that, and how he will limit it. And,

(4.) By consequence, it must needs be a measure of all events; because nothing can eventually fall out, but according to his will, either effecting or permitting; and there being no determination of his will which is not still under the direction of divine counsel. And all this we must understand to be constantly transacting with him, with the greatest clearness and with the greatest facility imaginable. You do observe among men vastly different tempers and complexions of minds; some seem to be almost constantly calm and sedate, composed and serene, there appears nothing torpid or unequal in their frame or habit. Now, if we can conceive among human minds what is more perfect, and what is less, sure it should not be difficult to us to take our assent, and conceive concerning the Divine Mind, that it must be most absolutely perfect, never liable to any cloud, to any discomposure, all things lying in a most perfect clearness, and having their eternal formation or form there, with the greatest imaginable facility; and infinitely more than we can imagine. So as there is no cause for any thought concerning a *plenus negotii Deus*, as the epicurean objecteth, concerning such a Deity as should be engaged and taken up about making and about governing such a world as this, that this must give too much business to such a Being, as we are not to conceive of otherwise than as perfectly happy, it not consisting (as they foolishly imagine) with the felicity and happiness of such a Being. But when we can conceive in some men, with how very great composure of mind they go through a great variety of business, their minds being always clear and serene, can we not consider concerning God, that his understanding is infinite, as reason and Scripture do most plainly speak; and so that nothing could ever be excluded it, or lie without it? as the various images of things are represented in a clear glass, detected there, without giving any toil or labour to the glass, or inferring upon it any charge. And so the schools have been wont to speak of God's eternal knowledge of things, that he beholds them all as in an everlasting and eternal *speculum*, there being that perpetual and eternal clearness in the Divine Mind, that things lie there without any discomposure to him, without any disorder, in the same state and frame, wherein they do actually fall out; so as when they do actually fall out, whatsoever disturbance there is of one thing with another, and among the things themselves variously interfering, yet all these things are beheld without disturbance to him; as the various motions and agitations of many persons in a room, all represented in a clear glass, make no disturbance or discomposure in it at all, whatsoever there is in the things represented. Therefore I pass,

3. To the reasons why we are to ascribe to God such a concern about human affairs, so as to employ the counsel of his will, even from eternity, about them. I will shortly name to you these two plain and obvious things, as the reasons thereof, besides what Scripture doth, in many more places than those that I have named, expressly assert about it: 1st, The most absolute perfection of his nature cannot but infer it: and 2d, The supremacy, the universality, and accurateness of his government.

(1.) The perfection of his nature, that cannot but infer it. He being every way perfect, absolutely perfect, (which he must be, if he be God; we have no other notion of a Deity but of a being absolutely and universally perfect,) he must be omniscient, and must know all things; and if so, he must always have known them; for if ever he did not know them, there will be some addition to his knowledge when he comes to do so. But that knowledge to which there can be an addition is imperfect; and therefore, the divine knowledge could never admit of any addition, but all things (as was said before) must have lain open everlastingly with him to one eternal view. And,

(2.) The supremacy, universality, and exactness of his government, doth necessarily infer it. Inasmuch as he is Lord over all, and is Most High, there can be none above him that should be director of such affairs. And inasmuch as he is universal Governor, if any affairs lie not under his government, they can lie under none. It is not a supposable thing, that one part of the creation should be governed, and another ungoverned; part under a ruler, and the other part under no ruler at all. And then, the exactness of his government, not considered absolutely, but respectively, that is, with respect to the state of the governed creatures, the governed communities that lie under the management and dominion of his kingdom. We are to consider this world as in a state of apostacy; and we are not to expect that he should deal with this world, as if men were in a perfect state, for their frame and temper are far from perfect. He deals with them as suitable to the state of apostates, as those that have been and are in rebellion against him generally. And admirable it is that the methods of his government should be so mild and propitious; and that so much of common order should be preserved among them thereby, as we find there is, this being considered. But to such government, eternal provision and purpose are always necessary, and could not but be necessary. There must be eternal foresight of all that was to be done, and eternal purpose and counsel thereupon. We thence come,

4. To consider, that there can be nothing of ill consequence, justly and reasonably, drawn from hence. What is most supposable in this case, and of this kind, that is, which may present itself to a first view under the notion of an ill or inconvenient consequence, which chiefly lies under one of these two heads: 1st, That this hypothesis will preclude the use of human prudence; and 2nd, That it will shut our prayer. These are two things that carry a first and more obvious appearance of an ill consequence upon the supposition of what we have been hitherto asserting. But I shall labour to evince, that neither of these consequences can, with any reasonable colour, be thought to ensue. As,

(1.) That here there should be no place nor use for human prudence. Thus some may too hastily think and pronounce, If there be a divine counsel and purpose about every thing that a man can do, or about every thing that shall occur to him, that he may either enjoy or suffer, to what purpose is it for men to consult and determine, or contrive this or that? as not knowing but that they may, in the very thing they design and go about, run counter to the counsels of the divine will; and so all will be in vain, and to no purpose. We shall give you some considerations to show the in-consequence, that it follows not, that there is no pretence that the use of human prudence should hereby be excluded. As,

[1.] That all things are determined by God to fall out in the way wherein they do fall out. I told you at first, when I entered upon this subject, we are not to conceive any such thing concerning him, as that he doth decree and determine things abstractly, without reference to the *media* by which they are to be brought about. We are to impute no such thing to God, with reference to the eternal states of men, as we spake then; that whatsoever a man doth he shall be damned, be he never so good, never so strict, never so pious; or that whatsoever such a man doth, he shall be saved, let him be never so wicked, never so irreligious or profane, never so strongly persist and persevere in such a course. We are to impute no such thing, no such counsel, to the wise and holy God. Neither his word, nor the reason of the thing, leads us to any such thought concerning him. And so, in reference to these lower affairs, we are never to think any such thing concerning him, as if he laid down purposes and decrees concerning this or that end, without connecting in his own eternal mind and view, the whole scheme of all the ways and methods and means by which such ends are to be compassed and brought about. And therefore,

[2.] Those things which, according to the counsel of his will, are to be brought about by the intervention and exercise of human prudence; these things are actually so brought about; whatsoever is effected, whatsoever is done by the exercise of the prudence of a man, it lay in the divine mind and counsel, as a thing not only to be brought about, but to be brought about so, and in that way, by that very means, by the deliberation, and by the prudent contrivances, of such and such of his creatures, that should serve his purpose in such a way. And therefore,

[3.] In this case, and in reference to all such events, the very objection is an argument. The objection, the possible use, or advantageous use, of human prudence, is a proof and demonstration of it: for, according to divine counsel and purpose, such a thing as doth actually occur and come to pass by human prudence, was determined so to come to pass, by the intervention of human prudence. And again,

[4.] It is the much more common course, in the way of God's dispensation towards his creatures, to let things go on according to the posture and aptitude of the second causes by which they are effected and brought about; it is much the more common and usual course. He who is supreme Ruler and Lord of all, is not to be supposed but he may at pleasure lay on a restrictive or regulating hand, as he sees meet, to alter the natural course and tendency of things. But ordinarily he doth not so, but things do run on according to the aptitude, and disposition, and posture of the second causes, by the ministry whereof they are effected and brought about. And even as to voluntary and rational agents, whereas, the men of this world (who are such agents) are generally wicked, God generally, and for the most part, doth not hinder the ill purposes they have formed and contrived, and set themselves to execute. That, the Psalmist supposeth to be the common case, when, in that Psal. xxxvii. 7. he gives so weighty counsel in reference to that case, not fretting, nor letting our hearts tumultuate, and arise and swell within us, because of evil men that bring their wicked devices to pass, implying this to be the more ordinary case, that wicked men do bring their wicked devices to pass. God doth not lay that restraint, for great and holy ends and reasons, which will appear in their lustre and glory one day; but lets things run on in their own course according as the inclinations and aptitudes of other second causes do lead. And this being observably so, it is the most unreasonable thing in the world, to suppose that in rarer instances wherein the purposes of men are disappointed and frustrated by some signal hand from God, therefore the natural operations that do belong to men should be concluded to be generally or universally useless, or to be precluded; or that the principles were useless which were suited to such operations or ends as those. But,

[5.] We are further to consider, that if God doth more extraordinarily interpose, so as to disappoint the evil purposes of men, contrived by their subtilty and craft, which they are apt enough themselves to misname prudence,) he doth it in no such way as offers violence to the rational nature. He doth it by letting men befool themselves, or by letting them befool one another, or sometimes by letting the devil befool them. He sometimes lets one man befool another; as when that counsel of Hushai proved to be the means by which God turned (as David prayed he would) Ahitophel's counsel into foolishness. Sometimes he lets the devil befool men, acting according to his own inclinations, which he restrains not. He lets him loose, as he did to deceive Ahab, being a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets, unto Ahab's destruction. He would not, himself, infuse a lie into the mind of Ahab, (which was a thing his nature was most abhorrent from, being the God of truth,) neither would he let a good angel go and tell a lie to him, as unbeseeming and, indeed, impossible to one that had the divine image in perfection in his nature. But there being a proneness in the wicked spirit (as the matter is parabolically and dramatically represented) to go and deceive Ahab, in his prophets, to his destruction, he lets him go. But there is no violence offered to the rational nature of man in all this. He acts by judgment, (such as it is,) that is, by a mistaken judgment; not by none, or against judgment, against a practical judgment, which indeed to the nature of man were impossible. And those that are under such deceptions as these, when they do indeed play the fool: as Ahitophel's counsel was turned into foolishness and they all became fools that followed it, yet they thought themselves wise in so doing: and so, those that were reckoned or did reckon themselves wise, were taken in their own craftiness, and their counsels driven headlong, as in Job v. 13. the expression is. And what they do in such kinds, under such deception, they do freely and with complacency, pleasing themselves in their own way; so as there is no violence offered to the nature of man, considering him as a rational and as a voluntary agent in what he doth, even then, when his purposes are inverted and disappointed. But then,

[6.] If men do take up such purposes as it seems meet to the great and holy God to frustrate and disappoint, (which by extraordinary interposition, as hath been said, he doth very rarely; he is sparing in instances of that kind,) yet, that men are to blame themselves for; either, that they did propose to themselves unlawful designs; or, that they did pursue and prosecute lawful ones unlawfully; whence it hath seemed meet to that wisdom which governs the world, either to cross and defeat their designs, or to check and rebuke them, that they may reflect on and understand their own folly in so mishaping in their own course, as they are often wont to do when they take up wicked purposes, and form wicked designs which prove abortive. And how should it be otherwise, if they take counsel against the Lord and his anointed one, his Christ? Do you think it strange that that should be in vain? "Wherefore do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Why is it a vain thing that they imagine and devise? It is counsel against the Lord and his Messiah. And if there be an inverture of the counsel and purposes of men which do lie cross to the divine counsel and purpose, and that they clash with one another, what wonder is that? Nay, whose will is it fit should rule and oversway in such a case? Is God to quit the sovereignty, and yield up his throne and sceptre, and say unto vain creatures, "Be it according to your mind, and according to your will," when they will nothing but mischief, wrong to him, and ruin to all that are better than themselves? And sometimes they pursue the most lawful things unlawfully; and then it is meet that God should some way or other give a check to them. As in such an instance as the apostle James mentioneth, (chap. iv. 13.) of such as say, in the power of their own self-conceit, and self-will, and self-confidence, "We will go to such and such a city, and will tarry there a year, and we will buy and sell and get gain;" and forget all this while that they live under the divine dominion and government; that they ought to say, "If the Lord will, we will do so and so." It is very fit, that in such cases, God should put them in mind they have a Lord over them, and that he should give a check to such insolencies. And if they meet with rebukes because they will not carry themselves like those that like under the dominion and government of a Ruler who is superior to them, they will not walk in that light which before hath been

made to shine in their minds and consciences, and God takes a severe method with them, to make them know themselves and him; there is nothing unfit done in the case. He doth but what he owes to himself to do, that he may do himself right, that he may not lose the honour and acknowledgment that are due to him, as he is Lord of all. But now, upon such a supposition as this, it is no more reasonable to say, that the understanding, or reason, or wisdom, or prudence which any man hath, is given him in vain, than it would be to say, that because such and such a man is a very prudent, wise man, it is altogether in vain that he should have a prudent servant. And yet, there is no man so wise, but if he have occasion for a servant, he will have an understanding man to be his servant, and not a fool; a prudent one, and not one that is rash and foolish, and would do things precipitately and to disadvantage. But how unreasonable would it be to say, that because such a wise master will not let even this wise servant do his business his own way, but will check and control him, and exercise the authority of a master over him, therefore, such a man hath a prudent servant in vain? Who would be so foolish as to say, the prudence of such a servant is to no purpose unless he may be master, and carry every thing his own way, according to his own mind and fancy? Or suppose a man had a watch that ordinarily goes well as he would have it, but sometimes he finds it to err, and then he rectifies it with his finger; would the owner of this watch, taking upon him to rectify it with his finger, say, "To what purpose are all the contrivances of this watch, and to what purpose are the several wheels and movements in it, if a man shall move it with his finger?" There is as little reason to pretend, that prudence and wisdom are given to any man in vain, because God will overrule him and show himself to be supreme in sundry such instances as may occur. I say, there is as little reason to say and allege this, as there would be to say, that all the articles in a watch are in vain, because it may need sometimes to be rectified and corrected by a wise finger.

LECTURE VI.*

I SHALL only add to all that hath been said on this head, that the counsels of the divine will do very well admit of the use of human prudence, in subordination thereto, and it hath its great significancy in such subordination, but in opposition thereunto, it can signify nothing. And nobody is to think this strange, in subordination to the counsels of the divine will. Human prudence signifies much, all that is covetable that it should signify. Many times God designs to bring about such and such events by the ministry of human prudence, and then the counsel of the divine will is so far from excluding it, that it doth necessarily include it, and take it in; cannot but do so. But most plain it is, that human prudence can signify nothing in opposition to the divine will. And would you have it? would any one wish it should? That human prudence should take place against the divine will, is that a thing to be wished? Or are we to be fond of human prudence in opposition to the divine counsel, as if we thought the world would be better governed by men than by God? That, sure, is never to be regretted, that there is no wisdom, no counsel, no understanding, against the Lord. Sure, that should trouble none of us, but please all. And to think, hereupon, that human prudence must needs be a useless thing, because God doth not put all into the hands of men, and leave them to do in the world whatsoever they please, as so many ungoverned creatures, (as was formerly hinted,) it might as well be said, To what purpose is it for a man to have a prudent servant, unless the servant's will and pleasure may take place in every thing against his master's.

(2.) But I come in the second place to that other supposed ill consequence, to wit, that the assertion of such a counsel of the divine will must exclude the great duty of prayer. And I think it is very material and of great importance to discourse to you somewhat largely upon this head; because, I know how common it lies in the minds of many men, as an objection against that great duty; or else, they make use of the objection of that great duty, as an objection against the divine counsel and purpose, and the hand which they are to have in all human affairs. Now, that this seeming difficulty may be cleared, I will give you sundry considerations. As,

[1.] That the primary or more principal notion that we are to have of prayer, is to conceive of it as an act of worship, that is, as a homage due and claimed to be paid to the great sovereign Lord of all. That is the principal and prime notion that we are to have of prayer; that is, that it is such an act of duty as wherein we are to own and acknowledge God: it is due to him, as he is God, to be supplicated, sought to; that there be a dependance upon him, professed and avowed by his reasonable creatures. Now this being the first and primary notion of prayer, an acknowledging of God, and avowing our dependance upon him, and of his superiority over us, as that adjunct expression of it, bowing the knee before him, doth import, I would fain know whether he be the less adorable, for that he is infinitely wise? And if he be infinitely wise, then his wisdom and counsel must extend to all things. But doth his infinite wisdom render him a less adorable Object? Doth he less deserve to be worshipped, or have his due homage paid him by his creatures, for that he is infinitely wise? The counsel of his own will extending to all things doth import so much; he is wise without limit, so as that the exercise of his wisdom cannot be excluded or shut out in any case. If it could be excluded in any case, it were not infinite; but because it is infinite, is it therefore a less excellency for being infinite? And so, doth he less deserve to be adored and honoured, and to have homage paid unto him as such? And,

[2.] Whereas, when we do pray, we do also express inclinations and desires of our own, that we would have this or that brought about, when we foreknow the event to be determined by the divine will: prayer is so far from being excluded by that, that we pray with so much the more vigour and cheerfulness and alacrity; and our hearts and souls are so much the more enlarged and engaged and drawn forth in prayer, even when we know the things we pray about are determined by the counsel of the divine will. As in that memorable case of Daniel's foreknowing by books, by Jeremiah's prophecies, that the approaching period and end of the seventy years, determined for the continued captivity of his people; when he understood this book, and discerned the approach of the time, he sets himself with so much the more vigour to pray: (as you see Dan. ix. 1, 2.) finding out that the matter was near, and towards a period, he doth not therefore think prayer excluded, but sets himself to pray with so much the more earnestness and vigour hereupon. As, indeed, if any do consider the nature of man's constitution, and the frame of the human soul, it is evident that desire and hope do influence one another. It is a mighty damp to all rational desire to have no hope. And if the thing be looked upon as desirable in itself; so much the more of hope, so much more of desire; and by how much the more hope doth rise towards confidence, desires grow so much the more fervent. As simple despair of any thing which we have an inclination to desire, damps desire; when we see that the thing is altogether to be despaired of, reason itself dictates to us to withdraw our minds, and turn them another way. Daniel understood the time drew on, when this sad calamitous state of his people was to find its period and be determined; then he sets himself with mighty vigour and fervour of spirit to prayer. And,

[3.] When we do not foreknow the event, as not having any discovery made to us what the counsels of the divine will concerning it are, yet, even then, the business of prayer is to refer ourselves, with reference to any such concernments, to the divine disposal. A thing most suitable to him and to us; to him, as he is the wise and sovereign Lord of all; and to us, as we are depending creatures, subject to his government, and are disposed of, in reference to all our concernments, or whatsoever we have any concern about, as he sees good. And therefore,

[4.] In reference to such things, wherein we are ignorant of the event and what God will do, the proper design of

* Preached April 19th, 1692.

prayer is, to endeavour to obtain at his hands a disposition of spirit complying with his pleasure, so as there may be no contest between him and us; that whenever the event falls out, if it do prove agreeable to our inclinations, we may rejoice in it with so much the more raised and sincere gratitude; if it do not, that we may submit to him, without engaging in a contest with one who giveth no account of any of his matters; and with whom, none can contend and prosper. They must always have the worst of it, they must be worsted in it if they engage in a contest with him. Therefore, the business we must design in such prayer, or in prayer about such things, (the issue whereof we do not foreknow,) is not to bring the divine will to ours, but to bring our will to his. As the matter is aptly enough illustrated by some, suppose one comes down a rapid stream in a boat, and hath the opportunity to throw an anchor or hook on the shore, there he pulls, as though he would draw the shore to the boat, and yet, all that he can be rationally supposed to intend, is to draw the boat to the shore. So are we to design in prayer, that plucking ourselves unto God, the drawing of our souls to a compliance with him, that our wills may be brought to unite with his; not that we can imagine to change his will by any thing we can say, more than in the narrative of our prayer we do suppose to ourselves the informing him of any thing whereof we suppose him before ignorant. "He is of one mind, and who can turn him?" Job xxiii. 13. And therefore,

[5.] The availableness of prayer, considered in reference to the counsels of the divine will, is to be estimated by the tenor of our prayers: according as our prayer is modelled, so it will be available or unavailable. This is the confidence we ought to have in prayer, "that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us," 1 John v. 14. And therefore, further,

[6.] We must make it our great business, in all our addresses to him in prayer, and especially in reference to temporal concernments, (about which we have no express signification of his will, as we have about spiritual and eternal ones,) to have our prayers so formed as that they may agree with the court of heaven, (as I may speak,) whither they are to be addressed. As if any man on earth is to petition a human judicature, he must endeavour to know the style and phrase of the court, and that his petition may be right in point of form; and especially so are we concerned to do in this case, when we are to address the great God. There must be a becomingness of God observed, that we address to him as God is to be addressed to, and one that is absolutely supreme, and perfectly wise and good, who (according to that observable saying which I remember in the great Jew Philo, who gives us this notion of himself) hath given us that discovery, that we have always a ground of so fixed and formed an apprehension of him as one that can do all things, and will do that which is best. Such a conception of God, if our prayers do but carry with them a conformity to that conception, that is, that we have this fixed confidence concerning him, that he can do what he will, and that he will always do what is best, we can never think that such prayers can ever be unavailable. But this doth so highly agree with this apprehension, that he doth all that he doth do according to the counsel of his own will, that it not only is not prejudiced thereby, but we are greatly confirmed in it, that if he doth all things according to the counsel of his own will, he will never do any thing that is wrong, he will never do any thing that we ought to have so much as a wish that it be otherwise than as he will do it; for as he can do whatsoever he will, so he will always do whatsoever is best. And,

[7.] Therefore we ought to form our addresses and petitions to God, according as his word hath given us direction. As there are rules, some way or other to be known in any prince's court, or in any court of judicature, how they are to be addressed to: some way or other, it is to be understood. And we may understand by his plain word, how he is to be addressed to. As to all those things that are of principal concernment and necessity to us, we find directions in his word to pray for such things, with promises they shall be granted upon serious and sincere prayer. We know his will so far about our principal concernments, as that they who repent shall be forgiven, they who ask his spirit shall have it, to them that improve what they have, he will give more, that if we set ourselves to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, he will work in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. About these, our greatest concernments, we are at a certainty. He hath told us in his most plain and express word, what he will always do in such cases. But we are always left uncertain about such things as are less considerable, and about things too, that are of a mutable goodness, that is, that are sometimes good and sometimes evil. The things of the mind are invariably good, always good; what is the goodness of the mind is always so. That the mind be knowing, intelligent; that it be holy, pure, subject unto God; these are things always good, invariably good. But it cannot be said so concerning the *bona corporis, the good things of the body*, or the *bona fortunæ, the good things of fortune*, that they are always goods, for their goodness is to be measured according to their suitableness and conformity or subserviency to some greater good. For we are to consider that as we have bodies so we have minds too; and that which would be good for my body, if hurtful to my mind, it loseth the nature of goodness; and therefore, is that goodness mutable, according as circumstances will render such and such things more and more subservient to a higher good, to a nobler kind of good that we are more to be concerned about. And therefore, for those things which are of a mutable goodness, they cannot be the matter of an absolute promise, that shall be concluding and determinative concerning them universally, and at all times; because at some times that which would be a good, it may at another time degenerate into evil, by the variation of circumstances. But an evil cannot be the matter of a promise; it would be the matter of a threatening at such a time when it ceaseth to be good. If it should stand in the promise under the notion of a good, but by this and that circumstance loseth its aptitude and suitableness to the end wherein this goodness lies, then doth that good turn into an evil, and so cannot be the matter of a promise. You cannot say, you promise any one that which is evil, or which would be a hurt to him; therefore the promises of God, in reference to things of this nature, are always suitable to the nature of the things. We have as express promises concerning temporal good things as the nature of the things will bear, or our circumstances admit, and therefore, God hath done more suitably to himself and us, in reference to such things, in telling us "all things shall work together for good to them that love God and that are the called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 28. Indeed, a person that is a sincere lover of God, cannot but be the better by whatsoever event occurs to him in external respects; for that love is an active principle in him, that co-operates to the making good of the promise. It thinks no evil, it makes a man construe well all the divine dispensations, it forms his spirit to a compliance with the divine pleasure, and so, good will come out of it to such a one, to a so qualified subject, whatsoever the event be. And therefore, all the business of prayer that it may be significant and available, is to have it formed and modelled according to the tenor of the divine will as God hath expressed that will to us in his word, and to pray for things agreeably to the discovery we have thereof: that is, with a peremptory confidence, in reference to those things that are expressly promised; and with submission, in reference to all other things: satisfying ourselves with this, that he who is the most perfectly absolute, supreme God, nothing of evil can proceed from him, but as an ill affected subject turns things into evil to itself. And so the Gospel becomes "the savour of death unto death," to an ill disposed mind; not from what it hath in itself, or as it proceeds from God, but only from the disaffected state and condition of the subject. And then again,

(8.) We are to consider this, that the interests of men in this world in reference to their temporal concernments, do so generally interfere and cross with one another and oppose one another, that it is impossible all prayers should be granted. For there are many times prayers against prayers. One man or this sort of men prays for this event, and another sort, for the quite contrary event. Therefore, it is most absolutely necessary that the divine counsel should moderate, and have its agency, not only in bringing about events, but even in forming the spirits of men.

When interests do so clash, and desires and prayers so contradict one another, (as they many times do,) with what confusion would it fill the world, if every irregular desire should be granted! And indeed, if the wills of men were to regulate the will of God, and their prayers were to prescribe, it would make fearful work in the world: if we had such a kind of *fatuum numen, a silly deity*, to be the object of our addresses and prayers, that were to use no counsel, no wisdom in judging what is fit to be done, and what is not, but every human desire should engage the divine power, and employ the divine hand, with what ruin and desolation would men's prayers fill the world! And so this world would be made a desolate wilderness, at that rate, if the prayers of men, without the interposition of the counsel of the divine will, were to prescribe finally what were to be done for them. And therefore, again,

(9.) It ought to be considered, that wherever there is any such thing as right prayer, there is a divine Agent to be employed, in reference to the whole business of prayer. As we have an Advocate and Intercessor without us at the right hand of God above, so, all that do belong to God have an Advocate and Intercessor within them. All the children of God, because they are such, because they are sons, God sends the Spirit of his Son into their hearts to teach them to cry, Abba, Father; as Gal. iv. 6. compared with Rom. viii. 15. And it is therefore called the Spirit of adoption, because it belongs to the adopted ones, to those that are taken into that state and condition of sons; because they are sons, the Spirit is given. It is an intolerable injury, and absurdity, that among us who are called Christians, with whom it is an article of our creed, that we believe in the Holy Ghost, we should so little consider what hand and part he is to have in this matter. It is an idle vanity to think, that he is to dictate words to us, and that there ought not to be prayer, but what the Spirit ought to indite the very words of. No, that is not the business of his office; but to possess the soul with such a living, internal sense to which words will correspond; that soul that is filled with such a sense, will not want suitable words, (at least between God and itself,) in which to utter that sense to him. And so is the work of the Holy Ghost, in this matter, expressed in that Rom. viii. 27. That when we know not what to pray for of ourselves, that Spirit makes intercession in us according to the will of God; (so we read it and do interpose in the translation more than is in the text;) it makes intercession according to God, (so it is in the original,) not barely according to his will, but in subserviency to his interest; and to his great one, which (it is true) his will must always respect too, as we cannot doubt. And therefore, if he is to be applied unto, and relied upon, that great Agent of God: and we are to refer it to him (as it were) to mind our petitions, that they may be right in form, this is the great business of that Spirit; he is thus far (as it were) the Master of requests, and we are to resign ourselves to him, to put our spirits under his formation, under the dominion of the Divine Spirit. "I do not know whether my mind may agree with the Divine Mind, yea or no, but O! do thou make it agree, and conform it thereunto." And lastly,

(10.) We have, upon the whole, this to consider, that all prayers once so rectified and put into the right form and tenor, they do ever obtain their principal answer. According to the great platform and model of prayer that is given us, we pray with principal reference to the divine honour, if we pray aright, that the name of God may be hallowed; we pray that the governing power of his kingdom may obtain and take place all the world over: we pray that his will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. We have particular inclinations and desires of our own; these we are never to express but with this reserve, "Lord, if these desires of mine agree with thy will; if they agree not with that, I renounce them, I disclaim them." So every good man is then answered, if he be denied: if he be denied in one respect, he is answered and his petition granted in higher and more principal respects; for the principal thing he aims at is, that God may be glorified, "Hallowed be thy name;" and that in order and subserviency thereunto the governing power of his kingdom may take place, and that his will may be done. These are the great and principal petitions; and all things else are to be petitioned for but as they subserve these.

And therefore, now to sum up all. Prayer, it may be from two sorts of persons, either from a devoted or from an apostate creature. Prayer, proceeding from a devoted soul, can never fail of its principal answer: for every such prayer is influenced by supreme love to God; his interests comprehend all our true interests: so that all doth but come to this, whether I love God more than myself, then that love will always dictate such prayers as can never miss of their answer. That is, if I pray as a devoted creature, and to be a devoted creature is to pray, is to love God more than myself. But if I pray as an apostate creature, that is, as one that is gone off from God, and keeps off from God, and hath a separate interest from God, and will not come to him and return to him again; then my prayers always run after this tenor, "Lord, I pray that my will may be done, that my interest may take place and be served, whatsoever becomes of all or any concernments besides." But what! would we have the counsels of the divine will to give place to such insolent requests as these? that were, in effect, to pray, "Lord, do thou descend and come down from thy throne, and resign it to me, and let me set up for myself; I would be a god to myself, and I desire to make no other use of divine power, (finding my own impotency in many things,) but only to serve my own purposes and ends."

Therefore, there is all imaginable encouragement to sincere prayer, from this doctrine, that God doth all things according to the counsel of his own will. And, this, surely, we are greatly concerned to consider in such a juncture of time as we are now cast upon; nothing can be more opportune. We have a dubious prospect before us; we know not how things may issue. Now to pray with hearts possessed with the sense that God doth all things after the counsel of his own will, is the best preparation for prayer, in reference to the present concernments of this season, that can be thought. That is, it is such a disposition of spirit that will, in this duty of prayer, be both most honourable to God, and most comfortable to ourselves.

Most honourable to God; nothing could reflect on him more than to pray with a contrary notion concerning him; that is, that he doth not do things after the counsel of his own will, but as poor foolish creatures here in this world shall prescribe and dictate to him; they make him do any thing, draw him to this or that by the importunity of their requests and desires. You cannot give a notion of God more injurious to him or more repugnant to his very nature. For then we must suppose him a Being of mere power, absolute, almighty power, which any fool may command when he pleaseth. What a strange sort of Deity do we worship! particularly if we pray with such a notion of God as this. But nothing can be more comfortable to ourselves, than to supplicate him, according to this true notion of him, that he doth all things after the counsel of his own will. With what quiet minds may we pray; and acquiesce in all the issues of things! Things lie in the best hands they can lie. We have this to satisfy our hearts in: and though we pray as men, we are to expect he should answer as God. We can pray but with the wisdom and foresight of poor fallible creatures; but then we are to expect him to answer according to the wisdom of an all-comprehending Deity. And as this is most highly honourable to him; so it will be most highly satisfying and comfortable to ourselves, and upon the best terms from which a reasonable mind can receive any satisfaction.

LECTURE VII.*

IT only remains to make some *Use* of all that has hitherto been spoken. And so comprehensive a truth as this, you will apprehend to be of very large and copious usefulness. I shall contract as much as the matter admits. It serves,

1. To show us, how we are to form our notion of God.

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And if any have a mistaken one, how they may rectify and reform it. It lets us see we are to conceive of God to be a Being of infinite wisdom, for according to our notion of counsel, it is the immediate product of wisdom. Only, when we apply it to God we must do it so as to sever all that it imports of imperfection, and to include all that it imports of highest perfection. We find it needful with us, to consult and advise with our friends sometimes; however, with ourselves, and our more deliberate thoughts; but no such thing can be said of God, with whom all things lie open, in one infinite, eternal, and all-comprehending view at once. That is not the meaning of counsel with him, as it is with us, as though being uncertain and doubtful, we did need to be counselled and advised; but that of perfection, which we mean by counsel and most perfect judgment of things, that we are to ascribe to him; and so, as that is the result of wisdom, it is with him in the highest perfection without consideration, so, that we can have no notion of wisdom, that doth not imply counsel; nor of divine counsel, that doth not imply the most perfect, most exact, and most accurate wisdom. We see he doth all things according to the counsel of his will, so as never to err in any thing; never to make one wrong step. For how often is he celebrated by expressions, that do import so much, God who is wise. What glorious ascriptions are there to him as such. "To God only wise, be honour and glory," Rom. xvi. 27. And so that of 1 Tim. i. 17. You have the same kind of doxology even in the same terms. And so in the epistle of Jude, the concluding words of that epistle; "To God only wise, be honour, and glory, and dominion, for ever and ever." This appropriate term, *only*, only wise, speaks that there is no wisdom that is not from him, nor in him; that he is primary wisdom, the original seat of wisdom. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally. He can do so, he hath it in all its fulness, in its most absolute plenitude, in himself, James i. 5. And therefore is he said to be the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, every congenerous gift; we must understand it agreeable to so exuberant a Fountain: and hereby, we are to rectify our thoughts of God, if we have taken up wrong ones; for we must conceive of the several attributes of the Divine Being, agreeably to this, as they are complicated with this most perfect wisdom, as that is most especially conjunct therewith. If any should think of God's power, as only an act of boisterous omnipotency, working at random, not guided by wisdom and counsel; if they should conceive of his will, as if it were a stiff, inflexible resolvedness of doing things without judgment or wisdom; if they should conceive of his wrath, as an all-consuming flame, burning up all before it, without distinction, without discrimination; if any should think of his love as a fond inclination to this or that person, or thing, without being directed by wisdom or counsel; all this is infinitely to wrong God; it is indeed to create to ourselves a God like ourselves. But this is infinitely injurious, to represent him by ourselves, as a being of mere power, and of mere will, without considering that he is a Being of infinite wisdom, and so doth all things according to the counsel of his own will. And again,

2. We are further to learn, how we are to conceive of God's works; for every thing works as it is: and as he is a Being of wisdom, we are to reckon, that there must be characters of wisdom and counsel upon all that he doth. There is, eminently so, upon the works of his creation. He hath established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion, Jer. x. 12. Wisdom is the parent of order, wheresoever there is any thing of order that surely must be attributed to wisdom as the directive cause of it; it must be found, if not in second causes, yet in the First. The stable ordinances of day and night, the certain returns of summer and winter, the regular motions of sun, moon, and stars, and the like; in all these we are to behold the wisdom of God, who hath settled things by so accurate counsel, according whereunto he doth all that he doth. And so we are to conceive concerning the works of his providence too, that there are counsel and wisdom which conduct them all, which regulate human affairs wherein men have themselves but a subordinate agency, under the supreme and sovereign Ruler of all. We are to reckon nothing falls out casually, nothing undetermined, either to be wrought or effected by him, or at least to be permitted, for greater and more preponderating reasons, against the restraints that might have been laid upon the second causes, by which they are wrought. And again,

3. We are further to learn hence, the extensiveness and universality of God's powerful and governing influence. He worketh all things, he hath an agency about all that is done. It is true, the words are capable of being thus understood, He worketh whatsoever he worketh according to the counsel of his own will. But there cannot a hand be lift up, nor a foot stir, not a power or faculty of any creature be exerted, but he hath a working agency one way or other in reference thereto; not so much as a sparrow falls to the ground, but it is within the compass of that agency of his, which doth all things after the counsel of his own will. Not so much as a hair drops from any head without him; all things, as they refer to him, are done with number, weight, and measure; and so, wisdom and counsel have a universal exercise, in reference to all things that are done under the sun, even the meaner concernments of men in this world. If you go to the business of agriculture or husbandry in the general; the several methods of husbandmen in ploughing, sowing, threshing, and the like, are all said to be from the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, Isaiah xxviii. 29. And therefore, we are hereupon to acknowledge, and own with adoration, the universal extensiveness of his governing influence; as was formerly noted in the opening of the words, in working all things; that is the expression, an energy that is most intrinsic, intimate, inward to every inferior agent, still exerting and putting forth itself, in whatsoever is wrought or done under the sun. And he is even more intimate to us (as paganish light itself doth more anciently observe) than we are to ourselves. That phrase is fetched from more refined paganism, into the schools of Christians, that he is more inward to us than we are to ourselves, so as that there is a divine energy working and stirring in every created agent whatsoever. And,

4. We may next learn hence, the reasonableness and congruity of all his public constitutions and laws, which he hath made for the government of his reasonable creatures. Legislation is a great act of sovereignty, indeed the prime and most principal. If God do all things according to the counsel of his own will, it is according to the counsel of his will that he hath made laws for those who are capable of government by law, as only the reasonable creature is. Laws are frequently spoken of under the name of counsels. Your human laws are commonly called *consulta*, as among the Romans, those that went under the name of *senatus consulta*; such things as were advised upon, and, as it were, weighed in balances. Are they fit, or are they not? Will this be a useful constitution, yea or no? And so is the frame of divine laws spoken of, under the name of the counsel of God. The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, Luke vii. 30. It is spoken in opposition to Christ and his teachings. Those that were doctors of the law among the Jews, they rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Indeed, the whole revelation of God's mind, about the salvation of men, it bears that name, which included the preceptive as a very noble part of it. I have not shunned, saith the apostle, to declare unto you the whole counsel of God, Acts xx. 27. In all this, therefore, we ought to acknowledge and adore a divine wisdom, and especially in that which is the standing constitution, for the governing of men, in reference to their salvation and final blessedness, since the apostacy, and you find God most highly celebrated and magnified, upon that account, in that Rom. xvi. latter end: the apostle there speaking of the Gospel constitution, under the name of a mystery, concludes all thus, "Now to him that is of power to establish you, according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ," (ver. 25:) according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations, for the obedience of faith, "to God only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ for ever." His wisdom is conspicuous in this established constitution of his,

which is to last through all the ages of time, and which is the constitution of that kingdom, which is never to be shaken. That is called the kingdom not to be taken down, Heb. xii. latter end. The compages whereof are so firm and strong, as to suit a designed perpetuity. Whereupon, they that live under the Gospel, are warned concerning their deportment under it. Now that we have received a "kingdom, that cannot be shaken, let us have grace to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." He will not now be dallied with by men, whom he hath put under the dispensations of the Gospel; as that epistle to the Hebrews begins. There were some temporary constitutions wherein God did deal with men, and speak to them in various and variable methods. But now, he hath spoken to us by his Son: and this is such a state of things as shall last as long as the world lasts, and those that do not comport with this method or law of grace, in order to being saved, shall never be saved! Therefore, let us seek grace to serve him acceptably. The last efforts of divine wisdom are seen in this constitution.

5. It thereupon, therefore, further, let us see the impudence of sinners, who confront their own imaginations, and their own lusts, to the wisdom and counsel of the divine constitutions; for that is indeed the case, and the very state of the controversy between God and a guilty creature that hath been in an apostacy from him, and doth yet refuse to return. This is the very sum of the controversy between God and them, Who is wiser, who is best capable of prescribing and giving laws? for wisdom is the most conspicuous thing (as was said) in legislation. Authority is supposed, it is true; but if there be never so unquestionable authority, if there be not wisdom to use it, it would be strange work that one destitute of wisdom would make of governing authority; strange laws, strange edicts there would be, where there was uncontrollable power without wisdom. But (as was told you) when laws are to be made, here is the great exercise of governing wisdom, such as doth befit the state of a ruler, to consider how the exigency of the case may be answered, what laws will be more suitable for such and such, or for a people in such circumstances. Now, when the counsels of heaven are opened (as it were) into a result, in such a constitution; here is the law of that kingdom that is erected and set up for them that are to be saved. And here comes an insolent creature and contends against the Lawgiver, and disputes the matter with him that gave him breath; what impudency is here! That law of grace, it saith, wheresoever it is promulgated, to them that come under this government of grace, or will be the disciples of grace, grace doth teach them that live under it, "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, godly, and righteous in the world." But here is an impure, obstinate sinner, to whom notices are given of the good and acceptable will of God to this purpose, that the Gospel that is preached to him, the law of the Redeemer's kingdom, it saith at the very first, Repent, now the kingdom is come among you, repent, turn. The divine wisdom saith to the sinner, "Turn, turn or die, turn or thou art lost." But he saith, It is wiser to go on, to persist in my own course; it is a wiser thing to live a stranger from God still, and as without God in the world. Divine wisdom saith to men, "God hath a mind and design to save you, deny you all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and subject yourselves to God." "No, it is wiser (saith the sinner) to live an ungodly life still; it is a wiser thing to lay the reins on my own lusts, and do whatsoever is good in my own eyes; it is wiser to please my own flesh than the God that made me; it is wiser to indulge sensual inclination and follow the imagination of my own heart." For men, I say, to confront their own imaginations and lusts to the divine counsel, it speaks the height of impudency in sinners, that they do not turn, that they will not be brought back to God. And,

6. It further lets us see how sad and forlorn the case of unreconciled and impenitent sinners is. God hath done all things according to the counsel of his own will, therefore, the constitution that he hath made and settled, is uncapable of change. There is an immutability stamped upon the divine counsel, and what is likely, then, to become of such men as run counter to all the wisdom and counsel that is conspicuous in the divine constitutions? Because of their perfection they cannot be changed, and because of the sinner's wickedness, he will not. God cannot change, and men will not. What is then like to become of things between him and them? But,

7. We may further learn hence, how hopeful and comfortable their state is, whose minds and hearts are brought to a liking of the methods of God, for the saving of sinners, to a compliance and agreement with them. O! happy man! The unerring and therefore unalterable counsels of heaven, have determined well concerning thee, and concerning thy state. You see in this same chapter where the text lies, that the Gospel constitution carries (as it were) this inscription upon it, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." Look upon the whole frame of divine constitutions, that refer to the saving of sinners, and you may see (as it were) in golden letters written upon this noble fabric, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." Thus the Gospel constitutions stand (as it were) dedicated, "To the praise and glory of divine grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." And observe then what follows in the next verse, "In whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." This is the mystery of God; he hath made known to us the mystery of his will; it is a most mysterious thing that ever he should have such a will towards me. But he doth all things according to the counsel of his own will; and thereupon, there is an immutability and unchangeableness upon the determination of it, as you see in that Heb. vi. 17. Wherein, God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, he hath confirmed it by his oath, added to his word; that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, the heirs of promise might receive that strong, that steady, that unshaken consolation. It is to be attributed to want and deficiency of wisdom and foresight, that the constitutions and determinations of men need so often to be altered. Such and such an inconvenience was not foreseen; such a law was made, and it may be, a little trial and experience show it to be very inconvenient, and so, it is fain to be reversed, repealed, or needs some explanatory additions, or the like. It is reckoned a piece of meanness, and disparagement, to be put to alter edicts; and because the Medes and Persians were a proud and haughty nation, therefore where their laws and statutes irreversible, never to be changed; so that they did assume to themselves infallibility, and beyond what could agree to the condition and capacity of creatures, of men, in an imperfect state. But the divine counsel being all upon foresight, all the determinations thereof being made and settled upon one comprehensive view, here is no place for the supposition of a change. And therefore is this most highly consolatory to all that feel their hearts comply with the Gospel terms, with the evangelical constitutions: "I find my heart is wrought to a closure with that, and I am never to fear a change." It is the effect of his counsel, his immutable counsel which he hath shown, that such as we might have strong consolation, who fall in with and comply with his terms.

8. It further serves to let us see the vanity of their confidence, who have any separate interest, and drive any opposite design from, and to, this of the great God himself. His counsels must stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations; whereas the counsels of the froward are turned headlong: as the expression is, Job v. 13. How unequal is the contest, when there comes to be a competition between the design of a mortal man, though never so insolent, and that of the immortal God! Some of themselves have thought it insolent for creatures so to assume. Rabshakeh thought it were an imaginary thing, and very wrongly charged upon Hezekiah, yet seems to look upon it as a great piece of pride, "Thou sayest, I have counsel and strength for war," thinking it to be an unbecoming thing: yet, though he only speaks of the counsel and might of Hezekiah as opposed to his own, or that of his master Sennacherib; but he never thought how insolent it was to oppose that, his counsel to that of heaven. "I have counsel and strength for war," but how soon are all those counsels and strength blown upon,

blasted, and brought to nothing when God hath any work of his to do, whereunto that counsel and might are opposed. And to conclude, I add,

9. That since God doth all things according to the counsel of his own will, the times and seasons for doing any great work that he intends, are always chosen by him with most accurate wisdom. They are most fitly chosen; therefore, whereas we are apt to blame the divine methods because he doth not take our time and our way, how unreasonable is it, since it is plain, that all the things he hath to do are affixed to particular seasons, which lie under divine determinations! "Unto every thing there is a season and a time, to every purpose under the sun," Eccles. iii. 1. And if you will look a little further in that book, you will see there, that as there is a time for every purpose, every event, so there is also judgment for every time; there is judgment, which is the effect of counsel, or that whereunto counsel results. For every thing there is a time and judgment. And so thereupon, there comes to be a critical nick of time into which such and such things must fall, and into no other. And therefore, it is said, that "the misery of man is great upon the earth," Eccles. viii. 6. Because there is time and judgment to every purpose, therefore, that is, because time and judgment are not considered, are not understood by men, therefore, their misery is great. And so they are taken, many times, in an evil time, without foresight; they do not know the time; not because they are ignorant of the time, but because they are unready, unprepared, for what is to be done and suffered in such or such a juncture of time. And so you see their case is represented still, upon that account, miserable. But the wise, they do consider time and judgment: Happy men! therefore, happy men! as those two verses fall in together, Eccles. viii. 5, 6. This ought to be considered, and it makes a man a happy man that considers it. Therefore, how quiet and calm may all men's minds be; and the minds of the wise will be, that do equally consider things. We find things were determined most punctually, relating to the great concernments of that people God had in the world heretofore, when they were yet an unconformed people. Four hundred and thirty years must pass, just so many from the time of his capitulating with their head, Abraham, striking a covenant with him. And so much time there must be, because the sins of the Amorites were not yet full, and Canaan could not be ready for the reception of them, and there did four hundred and thirty years pass upon this account. When they were in captivity in Babylon, seventy years was determined for that. When the woman is in the wilderness, there is a set time; forty and two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days. And we are not to think that the determinations of divine wisdom and counsel are less certain because they are less known to us, and we only see by the event what was determined. Twenty years have elapsed since the haughty French tyrant hath been the terror and scourge of Europe, and especially of reformed Christendom; for it is so long (in the year 1672) that he first attempted on our neighbours and brethren of Holland. Many might have been apt to think, why hath not God animadverted on him sooner, put upon him an earlier rebuke? Why was it not the last year? Why was not his fleet scattered and his army broken then, as they have been, in several parts, this year? Or why was it not the year before that? Why, it is a foolish thing for us to contend and dispute with the counsel of heaven, and we are to refer it to the determination of divine counsel, to choose the fittest time to begin to animadvert on so insolent an enemy, and the aptest means how first to let him know that he is a mortal, and that they in whom he trusts have a mortality upon them; that they are liable to defeatments, to disappointments; that their strength is not brass or iron, or such as cannot be broken when he will. He can make so weak and mutable a thing as the wind to serve his purpose against so haughty a one. We are to consider that these things fall out according to the counsel of the divine will: he is not to give us a reason why no such thing was, so many years ago, why he did not raise up such and such, who might have abated his pride, and brought a blast upon him, long before now.

* Preached June 3rd, 1682.

Hitherto, we have by way of use, from the doctrine of this text, let you see so many *inferences*, and recommended so many *truths* from it, which, according to the aptitude that it hath in it, may help to rectify and regulate our thoughts, apprehensions, and notions in many things.

LECTURE VIII.*

THE further use which remains, is to direct *our practice*; for in many respects, it hath in it a great aptitude, and suitableness too. In order to this, it is requisite,

1. That we take up the several sorts of the considerations which may be had of the counsels of the divine will. And then,

2. That we reflect upon our own distemper, and the faultiness of our spirits and practice, in reference hereunto. And accommodately, then, to consider both of the counsels of the divine will, and of our own miscarriages, and so recommend to you sundry heads of instruction, in reference to our future practice. We are,

1. Variously to consider the counsels of the divine will. They may be either considered indefinitely; or else, they may be considered with some distinction, according to the various references they may bear towards us, and our concernments and affairs, whether they may be eternal or temporal; and these, whether they be private or public.

And again, whether they be known to us, or unknown; so variously may the counsels of the divine will be considered. And then, for his precepts, which are the result too of the counsel of his will. They expressly declare what it is the counsel of his will we should do, though therein, also, we are to expect his co-operation; he working and in-working also therein, according to the counsel of his will. And many times the counsels of his will are known to us only by the event. We never know what God would do, in this or that instance, till the event shows us. And so in such and such things, because the event hath not shown the counsels of the divine will in many things, they are yet altogether unknown to us.

2. Now, according to these various considerations of the counsels of the divine will, we shall find ourselves, many ways, to be faulty in reference thereunto.

As in reference to the counsels of God indefinitely considered, that either we ourselves do not firmly enough believe the great doctrine of this text, that he really doth all things according to the counsel of his own will; or that we deeply enough consider it not, and carry not an habitual sense in our souls correspondent thereunto: that we have not high and great thoughts as we ought hereupon: that we are so prone to dispute matters with him: that there is no more of dutiful compliance with the counsels of his will, even then, when they are known: that many are so apt to cherish in themselves a perpetual dread about their eternal concernments, which lie most certainly under the disposition of his own eternal will: that they are so distrustful of so wise and mighty an Agent, that doth all things according to the counsel of his own will: that there is no more of quietude, tranquillity, and rest of spirit in him, so considered, as one that doth what he pleaseth, and always according to wise counsel.

Now, according to these various considerations, which we ought to have, both of God and ourselves, of his counsels, and of our own miscarriages and distempers, are these *instructions* to be, which I am now to recommend to you. And,

(1.) I pray, Let us charge this upon ourselves, more thoroughly to establish the belief of this truth in our own souls, that God, in very deed, doth work all things after the counsel of his own will. Let not our minds waver and hover, in reference hereunto, as if this were a doubtful matter, as if possibly it might be otherwise, as if either he were ignorant or oscitant, and unconcerned about the affairs of his creature, as if any thing might possibly fall out without his advertency. For we should consider with ourselves, being once at a certainty about the existence of God, about which if we be not at a certainty, we

can be certain of nothing; if (I say) we be at a certainty concerning this, and we may be as sure of it as that we are, and that this world is, and that there is any such thing as wisdom, and power, and goodness any where to be observed and taken notice of in the world; we, and this world, and whatsoever there is of excellency and perfection in it, must all have some original; they are not nothing, and therefore could not come out of nothing. If we be (I say again) at a certainty about this, that is, in short, that there is a God, we may be at equal certainty about this, that he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. For I beseech you, reflect and consider how well would it agree with your own minds, and with the natural notions and conceptions that are placed and fixed there, to conceive of an ignorant God, or of an impotent God, or of an oscitant, neglectful God. Do but consider, how well any such conception or apprehension can agree with the natural notices you have in your minds already, and may take notice of, if you reflect. And thereupon, let disputes be at an end with you, and fix and establish the belief of it in your own souls, that in very deed he worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. And,

(2.) That hereupon (this being once thoroughly believed) it may be more deeply considered: and that we would labour to carry an habitual sense of it about us, from day to day, through this world. For to any one that considers, these things are very distinguishable; dead notions, and living sense, even in reference to the same truth. I have such a truth in my mind, but how have I it? If I have it as a dead notion, then it is all one to me as if I had it not. Let it not, therefore, satisfy us to have so mighty, important a truth as this lie in our minds as a dead notion; but let us labour to have it there as living sense, that we may resort to upon all occasions, and draw forth into present use as the matter shall, from time to time, require. And,

(3.) Labour to live adoring lives towards the glorious God, so considered, as one that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. How should we, hereupon, be composed of adoration towards the blessed God, so as that wherever any actual present instance occurs and appears to us, wherein that agency of his shows itself, we be always in a disposition to bow our heads and worship! Here is a manifest effort of Deity, as the power and wisdom of God, that doth all things after the counsel of his own will. We should especially labour to maintain an adoring frame and disposition of spirit, with reference to these two great excellencies of the Divine Being which appear and shine forth in view, in this truth held forth to us in this text: "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:" that is, almighty power and infinite wisdom. Two things, than which nothing can be supposed to make an object more adorable, to make any thing a fitter object of adoration. Almightiness—he worketh all things. Is not he almighty that can do all things? And infinite wisdom—for he doth all things after the counsel of his own will. So that wheresoever there is an exertion of his power, there is an exertion of his wisdom too, guiding that efficacious exertion of his will, that he doth not act in any thing by a boisterous and extravagant exertion of power, without judgment, or without wisdom, or without counsel: that all things that are done, are done by him, one way or other he hath an agency in every thing; and that nothing is done by him but by the direction of that wisdom that can mistake in nothing: all things consulted, and done after the counsels of his own will. A man of great might, and of great celebrated wisdom too, how venerable a person is he in the account of all? But to have these two things in conjunction, to wit, almighty power, with infinite, unlimited wisdom, sets a very adorable Object before our eyes. And it is a reproach to us, if we, thereupon, do not carry an adoring frame of spirit, every day, about this world with us.

(4.) Another instruction, hereupon, will be, that we never contend against him. What! against him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will? Is he a fit Object for our contention? Will we undertake to dispute matters with him? Think with yourselves, both how foolish and how wicked that must be. He that can do all things, whatsoever he will, it must be a very foolish thing to contend with him. What shall we get by it? He that contends with God, can he hope to be a gainer? He that strives with his Maker, wo to him: all that we can gain by it is but to infer a wo upon ourselves, Isa. xlv. 9. Therefore, it is a very foolish thing to enter into a contest which we are to despair beforehand of ever getting any thing by. And then, how wicked a thing is it! For certainly, the sovereignty must belong to him who worketh all things, and that after the counsel of his own will. It must, upon all accounts, belong to him. He will certainly carry the matter, and have the sovereignty. He worketh all things: almighty and resistless power is lodged in him; and he ought to have the sovereignty. For to whom should it so fitly appertain, as to him that doth all things according to counsel, never any thing rashly, nothing unfit in itself, nothing unseasonable, whensoever it is done? Therefore, (as the expression is there,) he that contends with God, let him answer it; let him try if he can; for to be sure he never can, he never will be able to answer it, to enter into a contest with God, who is One that so wisely, and according to so stable and so steady counsel and judgment, doth all things. Again,

(5.) Labour dutifully to comport with him as he is such a One that "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and according to such considerations, (as hath been hinted to you,) as we may severally have of these counsels of the will of God. There are counsels of his will that are made known and signified by his express precepts. As was told you, the last time, legislation, making of laws, is one of the prime acts of wisdom, wherein above all things that excellency is to be conspicuous and show forth itself. Now we shall dutifully comport with the counsels of his will, made known by his precepts and laws, when we do obey them. That when once we find that charge laid upon us to do so and so, by express divine precept, we immediately labour to get our spirits formed to an obedient compliance, saying within ourselves, "I have nothing to do, in reference to such and such a thing, but to obey." "Mortify such a lust," saith the command: "Lord, I yield, and will endeavour to obey." "Love me with all the heart and soul and mind and strength:" "Lord, I will to my uttermost." It is a law founded in counsel: there could never have been a wiser law, nor a more merciful one, from a good God, towards an indigent, depending creature, than that I should place my love, my desire, my delight on himself. If, considering me as a wandering creature, I find his word saith to me, "Repent;" a wise counsel is spoken to me according to the counsel of his will. I will persist in sin no longer; I will turn that I may live. If he have made known his counsels concerning such and such things that he will do, that he will put an end to this world, that the wickedness of the wicked shall come to an end; that his Son shall appear in the end of time, and shall be the final Judge; it is then dutiful to comply with such counsels of the divine will, to be always in an expecting posture; to say, "O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, according as thou hast determined; we approve of the counsel of the divine will, and will patiently wait till it come. And as for that appearance and coming of our Lord, we will wait and long for it; looking for it as the reviving, heart-gladdening hope of our souls." Whereinsoever the divine will is made known to us, or which way soever the counsels of it are known, let them be dutifully comported with. Such things are only known to us by the event, let us dutifully own and acknowledge them. I know it was the divine will, according to counsel, that such and such things should be either effected by himself, or permitted to be effected by those in whom he saw such a disposition, or from whom he did not withhold power to effect it. Again,

(6.) Take heed of slavish dread, in reference to your own eternal concernments. Most certain it is, that there are counsels of the divine will conversant about the eternal concernments of every one of us; but take we heed of slavish dread in reference hereto. There is no cause for it. It is an ungospel-like spirit to live in a slavish dread, even about our eternal concernments, under a Gospel of grace which deals with us principally about them, and whose special, particular, and great design, is to advise and direct us, even touching them.

But it may be here said, How is it possible for one in an uncertainty not to be in a dread about his everlasting concernments, about those concernments of his, which however they lie, will never alter, will always be the same? One that finds himself to have been, hitherto, under the power of some reigning lust or other, have not I reason to be in a continual dread, what shall become of me for ever?

That was a thing we find represented as not suitable to the state of a very Cain. Suppose thy state to be as bad, suppose thyself a very Cain for wickedness, you see how God bespeaks him, when there was some present token that he was not so acceptable as Abel was. Cain might perceive it, hereupon his countenance falls, and God reasons the matter with him: "Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? If thou persist still to do evil, it is true, sin, that is, vengeance, the consequent of sin, lies at the door. But if thou dost well, shalt not thou be accepted?" So he bespeaks even a Cain; so you must understand him to bespeak you. In the worst that you can suppose of your case, this is the counsel of the divine will even concerning thee. Hereupon, then, God ought to be the Object of thy reverence; not the Object of thy dread. Thou oughtest to reverence him, not to dread him, as one that doth all things after the counsel of his own will. But you will say again, "Where lies the difference?"

The difference is great, and most manifest, between reverence and dread. Reverence carries love in it; dread carries hatred. And am I now to dispute the matter with you, whether any man ought to hate God? Ought you to hate him, think you? Ought he to be the object of your hate? No, place all your reverence upon him, which certainly carries love in it. For reverence hath goodness for its object; the most excellent good is the object of my reverence. By how much the more there is of goodness in any one, by so much the more is he the object of my reverence. But it is evil, destructive, pernicious evil, that is the object of my hate, and consequently of my dread. But you are no more to think that God can be the Object of a man's dread, than you can think that a fit notion, or a self-consistent notion, an evil God. Can there be any such thing as an evil God? There can be no such thing as the affection of dread (involving essentially hatred in it) duly placed upon God, unless you would suppose an evil God, which is a contradiction even in the very notion. Therefore, turn all your hate (let the case be the worst that can be supposed) upon yourself, and all your love upon God. Think of him with reverence that carries love in it. And think of yourselves with that dread (as you are yet wicked creatures) which carries hate in it. And this is a true Gospel frame, to hate oneself, loathe oneself, fall out with oneself, judge oneself, condemn oneself; but all the while to reverence God; let him be ever amiable in your eyes.

Aye, but you will say, "How can this be but matter of dread to me, when I find myself a wicked creature, and whom, therefore, the wrath of God must pursue? for his wrath is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and I find myself such a one, a wicked creature, an ungodly, an unrighteous creature."

Do but consider here, the objection carries its own answer in it. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven." Against what? Against ungodliness, against unrighteousness: and you are such a one. But what, is it necessary always to continue such? The wrath of God can never be directed against any creature but as he is wicked. But when his word saith, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isaiah lv. 7.

But you may perhaps say, "I am a wicked creature, and this is the thing I dread, that I shall be always so; I cannot alter the state of my own case, I cannot mend myself; this is that therefore which makes me stand in dread."

Why, to that I shall shortly say, either you desire to be other than you are, or you do not; either you desire, of a wicked creature, to be made holy, godly, and righteous, or you do not desire this. If you do desire it, and you say, this is the object of your dread, that you shall never be other than a wicked creature, because you cannot mend yourself; why dread, (as I told you,) carries hatred in the nature of it, and hatred of wickedness. If you dread this continuance in wickedness, you hate it. But I would fain know, if it be possible to desire and hate the same thing. Do you desire and choose to be always wicked, and yet hate and dread to be so? These are inconsistent; what you say now, overthrows itself. It is impossible for you to desire to be always what you are, if you really dread, that is, hate, that state of wickedness wherein you are. If that be the matter of your dread, (as it ought to be,) then you do hate to be what you are, and you desire to be what you are not. Then pursue this apprehension further, a little, "I am a wicked creature, and I desire to be otherwise than I am, I dread myself, I hate myself as I am such; then I do desire to be such as God would have me to be, that is, a holy creature, and one conformed to his holy nature and will;" and if this be the posture of your soul in reference to yourself, and your own state Godward, you very well know what he hath declared of his readiness to accept such. When we confess our sins, with self-loathing, self-indignation, self-judging, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And when we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged. He never condemns that man that condemns himself, not notionally, but inwardly, with a concomitant hatred and loathing, which is somewhat else than the notion of the state and frame wherein you find yourself. But now, if you suppose that God will have no mercy upon such a one, that is to make a supposition to yourself of somewhat in the notion of God that is repugnant to the known notions of him; that is, as he is the God of all grace, as he is love itself, and as he hath told us this to be his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." But if you have such notions of him, that he will abandon and throw away a self-loathing and self-judging creature, and one that desires nothing in all this world so much as to please him, this is to create to yourself a formidable idol, instead of the true and living God: there is no such God as you imagine to yourselves. As an idol is nothing in the world, so is this nothing but your own idol, which is a nullity. There is no such God; but you create to yourselves such a formidable idol, and then hate him. You call that God, which is but of your own making, your own creature. But take God as he is in himself, and as he hath revealed and reported himself to be, the God of all grace, whose name this is, (and his name doth express his nature,) the name that he hath made himself known by, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious:" take this true notion of God, and set it before your eyes, and consider, "though I be an object of hate, sure I have now before mine eyes an object of the highest love." Is not this an object of love, a fit object, the most deserving object, the most amiable object that can be thought? Conceive of him so; and let that be your apprehensions of him, till you find his love gradually work itself into your souls, and transforming and changing you. And if you come once to this perceiving and believing this love, you have a love begotten and wrought in you, then God and you are happily met. Love and love cannot but unite and dwell together, and will everlastingly cohabit and dwell together. But if you say, you are a wicked creature, and you desire to be always what you are; if wickedness and you are inseparable, as they can only be by the union of your will with wickedness; then are misery and you united too, and can only be so by your adherence in heart and will to wickedness; and so you will be your own hell, and an everlasting fountain of misery to yourself; but God and his throne will be guiltless for ever, for he never hates a creature as a creature; his wrath can never reach you, but as you are one that continues in a will to be wicked.

But if you can truly say, "I would be otherwise, only I fear God will not help me." Why! hath he not said, he will give his Spirit to them that ask him? You are to take heed of forming a notion of God against his word; for he can have no will against his word; it is impossible he should. There can be no counsel of the divine will that contradicts his plain word. Therefore take heed of imagining any such thing to yourselves.

And so, upon the whole matter, there is place for that counsel, as what we are to resolve to live and die by, that is, never to entertain a slavish dread concerning our own eternal concernments. But, consider how the distinguishing characters are given in Scripture, between them that are saved, and them that finally perish. And if you find the present characters upon you that mark you out for hell and damnation, only say, "I am such and such now, but it is not necessary that I should always be what I am." Sin is not you, and you are not sin; they are separable, the are partable things: and only implore that grace and help of the Divine Spirit that is offered, suitable to the estate of lost and apostate creatures. And never entertain any despairing thought but that that Spirit shall be given when it is seriously asked and sought after, and desired by you: the state of no man's case can exclude such considerations as these, for while there is any thing of sense about a man's eternal concernments, though it be from common grace, it is from the Spirit of grace, for all grace is from that Spirit, and that common grace may be gradually leading on to special grace, if it be duly complied with.

So that there is still no cause for a slavish dread: that soul is not quite abandoned and given up by God, in which remains any concern about its future state, and about its case God-ward. You are not, indeed, to ascribe it to your own nature, if you are so solicitous about the divine favour, if you are not so swallowed up in this world, and immersed in sensuality, as to have all thoughts excluded about your soul-affairs, and your everlasting concernments. You are not to arrogate this to yourself; for we are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought: and there is a good tendency in those thoughts; and, therefore, all this ought to be ascribed to the Divine Spirit that is now, some way or other, at work with you; and those workings of his, have a leadingness and tendency in them to move to further and higher workings, which accordingly you are to expect with hope, and so to lay aside a slavish dread accompanied with despair, with utter despair that ever things shall be better with you.

(7.) And then, as to all your other concernments, intrust them freely and cheerfully to this God. He that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, how complete an object of trust is he! Whose heart would misgive him, who trusteth him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will? Can the counsel of his own will, can the counsel of that will which is guided by unerring wisdom, ever hurt any body? Will any body be the worse for lying under the determination of that will, which is guided by unerring counsel? Never fear to trust him in all things, who bears this character; a cheerful trust, a delightful trust, is most suitable to this representation of God. Never fret, never tumultuate, never admit of any distrustful thought; but at the same time, (as the direction is, Psalm xxxvii., beginning,) "trust in the Lord and do good," and place your delight in the Lord, and not fret at any thing we see fall out in the world; never fret, but trust; never fret, but do good; never fret, but delight thyself in the Lord. And therefore,

(8.) Lastly; The direction that is most suitable to this apprehension of God, is to preserve a continual quietude and tranquillity in our own spirits. The proper effect of such trust is quietness: "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." And, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee," Isaiah xxvi. 3. There is no room nor place for rational disquiet hereupon, in reference to any thing he hath done, or in reference to any thing we may apprehend he will do. Let there be such a constant calmness and tranquillity of spirit maintained, in opposition to vexation about past events, and to solicitude about future events: for these two things, we are apt to disquiet ourselves; about past events with vexation and future events with solicitude; and so we live uncomfortable lives. But there will be no place left, either for the one or the other, if we will but carry this apprehension about us, that God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. What cause, then, can there be for solicitude? God will not change his nature, he will be still the same. He will as much govern the world by counsel in all future times, and all the particular concernments of his creatures, and especially our own concernments, in respect of which we are apt to be solicitous. He will do as much as ever he did. For this is his essential character, and therefore can never cease to be so, that he doth all things after the counsels of his own will.

But you may say, "He may permit wicked men to do so and so, injuriously."

If he do so, he wisely permits it, and according to the counsel of his own will. And who would be afraid of the counsel of such a will? If he permit ill things to be done and fall out in the world, it is either for the exercise of their graces who belong to him in the world, and who are the called according to his purpose; it is that their faith, and their love to him, and their patience, and their subjection, and their heavenly mindedness, and the raisedness of their spirits above the world, may be more tried, and may further appear; or, it may be, for the correction and chastisement of his own offending people. And then, there is no place for fretting and inquietude of spirit, but calmly to accept the punishment of sin, lying down under it with a calm and submissive patience. Or it may be in reference to the future more illustrious display of his own glory, that he lets wicked men prosper and triumph for a time, and flourish like the green grass, when it is that they may be destroyed for ever. And never doubt but that he doth all things after the counsel of his own will, he will make all things finally to result into such an end as shall be suitable to so glorious an Agent, worthy of himself, so that angels and saints shall confess to all eternity, that all his ways and works were marvellous, just, righteous, and great; and worthy of himself, taken altogether. It cannot but be so, that the issue of things must be such as is most agreeable to him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

LECTURE IX.*

Heb. xi. 3.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

In that order of discourse, (wherein we have made some progress,) of treating of the several more principal heads of that religion which we all profess, we have spoken at large (as the last subject we insisted upon in this course) of the counsels of the divine will, or (which is all one) his purposes and decrees, according to which he is said to work all things, in that Ephes. i. 11.

And now, the next thing that comes in order to be spoken of, is that great WORK OF CREATION, which is part and the first part, the beginning of the execution of his external counsels or purposes of his will. This is the first of his external acts that terminate upon somewhat without himself. His decrees, though they have their term within him, and so come into the account, not of his transient, but of his eminent acts, and yet do differ, too, from all these internal acts of the divine Hypostasis toward one another; for they have their very objects in the Divine Being. But the decrees of God, though they have their term within the Divine Being, that is, they do, while they are his decrees, effect nothing *extra Deum, without God*, yet they have their object without him; that is, they refer, some way or other, to the creature. Now, in contradistinction to those internal acts of God that have reference to the creature, we consider his external acts, whereof this of creation is the first, and is leading and fundamental to all other subsequent and external acts of his, towards, or upon the creature, as now existing, till some act or other hath preceded, by which it might exist.

This is, therefore, such an act as makes its object, and doth not suppose it; as all following acts of God towards

* Preached January 17th, 1693.

the creature do suppose the object, and not make it; suppose it pre-existent, and then are concerned and conversant about it, as already existent; to wit, to sustain it, to regulate it, improve it, perfect it; or any ways alter it as he sees good.

And whereas this is the first step that God takes in executing the counsels of his will; that is, that being ascribed to him, to do all things according to the counsel of his will, he doth this great work of creation according to that counsel of his will. This will put an end to the great dispute about the original of all things: whether this world, and all that it contains, came of itself, or by fate, or by chance; or whether it were all entirely owing to some wise and designing intelligent Agent. If, I say, the authority of divine revelation may decide the matter, and so far obtain in the mind of men, there is an end of that dispute; that is, that since whatsoever is done by that great and almighty Agent, was done according to the counsels of his own will; then this world came not into being of itself, or by any fatality or casualty; but by wise counsel designing the thing, and the time, and whatsoever circumstances might refer thereunto.

And indeed, those that have not a divine revelation to guide their apprehension in this matter, and have but allowed themselves (as many have) a liberty of thought, have discerned those characters of divine wisdom and design, in the whole frame and contrivance of things in this great creation, as not only to acknowledge, but to adore, the wise Creator that hath given being to all. Every thing of order being the product of wisdom; wisdom and order have most certain relation one to another, as the productive principle, and the object produced. If there be such a thing as order produced, wisdom and counsel must have been the productive principle.

We, formerly, in the beginning of this series of discourse, had occasion to speak of the creation, from Romans i. 20. The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen in things that he hath made. It was upon another account that we discoursed of the creation then, not making that the terminative subject of our discourse, but considered it only as evidential of the Deity; we are now to consider it as effected by that almighty divine power; we now consider it as a matter of faith. "By faith we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God." And it was of absolute necessity that there should be that rational consideration of the creation, first, in order to the evincing of an object of faith, before we came to speak any thing of faith, or what was to be matter of faith; for no one can believe any thing, by the proper assent of faith, till he understands who he is to believe, and why. And it is the formal object of faith that we were to evince to you, in order to our showing the ground why we were to believe any material object that comes within the compass of divine revelation.

Therefore, having first evinced to you the existence and being of God; and then evidenced to you, that that revelation which we have in the Book of Scripture is from God; and thence having more distinctly considered the nature and perfections of God, as they are held forth in that revelation, together with the distinct Hypostases which that revelation assures us are in the Deity; we now come to consider the creation too, as a matter of faith also.

And it ought not to seem strange to us, that when we have heard the creation spoken of, as tending to evince to us the being of God, we should come now to discourse of it as a matter of faith; for most plain it is, that he same conclusion may be assented to on different grounds, and the one doth strengthen the other, and not detract from it. It is no prejudice at all to our receiving the doctrine of the creation, as a matter of faith, that it is also demonstrable in a rational way, any more than it doth detract from, or lessen the credit of, a human testimony, that many do concur and say the same thing; which detracts nothing from the validity of that person's testimony, but instead of that, adds thereto.

And we are to reckon it a great discovery of the divine favour and indulgence to us, when one and the same thing may be the matter, both of fiducial assent upon a divine testimony, and of rational demonstration also. God condescends to us, and is so much the more favourable, that he is pleased to make the same thing evident more ways than one, according as the occurrence of several *media* for the evidencing of any thing, doth beget a stronger and firmer impression of the thing itself, upon our minds. This is referred unto, allusively, to set forth the great assurance wherewith the Gospel revelation was given, 1 John i. 1, 3. "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life—that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you."

It is very true, indeed, that the creation generally considered, and more abstractedly, is very demonstrable by reason; not only to be rendered probable, or a likely thing, but certain and more demonstrable. That is, as I said, when we have in view so many sorts of things that we are sure were not always; and therefore, could not be of themselves; (for whatsoever is of itself must be always, must be from eternity;) then we are sure every such thing must have had some maker or other. And so, nothing can be more demonstrable, than that there hath been, and must be, a creation, even unto reason, and by reason.

But though reason may clearly apprehend and evince, in general, that there hath been a creation, it can never evince the way and manner, the method and order, wherein things have been created. All this must be owing to divine revelation, and to faith thereupon, if we understand, (as here it is said,) "through faith, the worlds were framed, by the word of God." By reason, we may know that the world or worlds were some time or other made; but we can only know by faith that they were made in six days, and that such and such was the order of making them, as the divine history doth report the matter to us. And therefore doth this text inform us, not only of this as an apprehensible thing, that the worlds were made, but it lets us see how we are to apprehend it. We are not only to understand this, but we are to understand it by faith, that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

We have, in the text, two distinct propositions, which are of two divers kinds: the first is dogmatical, or more expressly assertory, and the second is explicatory of the former.

The former, I say, is mere dogmatical. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." It is a thing to be understood by faith, that the worlds were framed by the word of God. And this I shall make the main subject of my discourse which I intend upon this scripture.

The latter is explicatory of the former, so that things which are seen, were not made of things that do appear, or were made, (which is the truer reading of the text,) of things which do not appear, or were made of not appearing things, not pre-existing things, that had stood forth into being before.

First. And for the first of these: you see it contains two parts—what it is we are to understand; and—how we are to understand it.—The thing to be understood, that the worlds were framed by the word of God, and—how we are to understand it, by faith, or through faith. It is faith that lets in the notion more distinctly into our minds. We have this notion by faith, as the word in the Greek signifies, the forming of a notion, begetting it in our minds. We have the notion begot in our minds by faith, that the worlds were so framed by the word of God.

1. We have first, and more principally, to consider the former of these, the thing to be understood. We shall consider the manner afterwards. And for the thing to be understood, that the worlds were framed by the word of God, we have here three heads of discourse more distinctly to be considered and spoken to—the object of this act, the worlds—the Agent whose this act or work is, that is, God, exerting his power by his word, and—the act of creation itself, what kind of act that is. It is here rendered, "framed." We shall speak to the emphasis of that expression hereafter, in its proper place, when we come to give you an account of the nature of the act, creating, which though that word doth not primarily and directly signify, yet supposeth, as we shall in a proper time come to show you.

(1.) We are to consider the object of creation, as it is

here expressed by this comprehensive term, the worlds, "The worlds were framed by the word of God." The word here so rendered, doth signify sometimes eternity, especially being plurally used. But sometimes also it signifies time, and sometimes an age, and in the plural, ages. But it doth also signify, in the narrower sense, time: not only time, in itself, abstractly and nakedly considered, but the things that lie within time: not the *mensura* but the *mensurata*, not only that duration, which is the measure of such and such things, but the things themselves that are measured thereby. And that is the sense wherein it must be taken here. Therefore, it is not the naked thing, time, that is spoken of here, (though the word, sometimes, hath that signification as the object of this creative act,) but all things that come under temporary mensuration, all that are measured by time, which is fitly enough expressed in our translation by this term, "the worlds."

And whereas, it is not said, world, but worlds, that shows, that the *continens* is more than one: and if the propriety of the Greek be considered, it also signifies them to be more than two; for the word is not a dual but a plural, and so it is more than one, and more than two worlds that are signified by this expression. And indeed, the matter is less indefinite; and it being impossible to us to know how many are the several circles of things that are above us, that are all made things, things altogether without our knowledge or comprehension, (as we have had occasion to tell you on another account, of our Lord's being ascended, and gone up far above all heavens,) we are left in a just uncertainty, (which belongs to us, and is proper to our state,) how many those heavens are, or those orbs of things which are replenished with creatures, (parts of the universe,) that altogether make the entire object of this creation, and this great creative act.

And taking that phrase, "the worlds," to signify whatsoever lies under the measure of time, so we are not barely to consider such orbs, but we are to take in all the *contenta*, as well as the *continens*, all the things contained, as well as the things containing. And so, it is the whole universe of created beings that comes under our present consideration: which, therefore, in speaking to us of the object of the creation, or what it is that is created, it is not to be imagined that we should speak of it in the singular, nor of all the particular kinds; but only under some general heads, into which the universe of created things may be distributed.

[1.] The first and most general and obvious distribution of the created universe, is into the more substantial things, and the modifications thereof; what is in itself a substantial thing, and what doth only some way or other modify such a being. And it is the former of these that is the proper object; creation more strictly and properly taken. Creation is, in the strictest sense, *suppositorium* of *supposita*, of things that do subsist not of themselves, in reference to any efficient cause: for so no created thing doth exist, by itself, in opposition to what doth inhere, so as to be a subject of things that do reside in it. And so, the modification of things are not properly created, in the strictest sense of creation; but are educed and brought forth out of those substantial beings that were themselves created, or made out of nothing; and so they, that is, substantial things, are the most proper objects of creation, that have a proper subsistence of their own, though with dependance on the efficient cause that gave them being. And after this distribution, comes,

[2.] The distribution of such created things, that is, substantial beings, in which all the diversifying *modi* do reside and have their place. And we are to consider what may be the more general distribution of substantial things, that are themselves created. And we can consider none more general, than this one, to wit, of all those created substances, into these two heads, matter and mind. If the inquiry be, What doth this universe of created beings contain? or what are the great spheres of being that lie within the compass of the created universe? Why, speaking of substantial things themselves, that are the subjects of divers distinct *modi* or modifications, they can be but these two, all will fall under these two heads, to wit, matter and mind. And this is that distribution of created things which the Scripture gives us a ground express enough for: Col. i. 16. "By him were all things made that are in heaven or that are in earth, visible and invisible." We may well enough suppose all matter to be, some way or other, visible, though there be indeed a finer sort of matter than is visible to us. But then, there is the other head of things, in that Col. i. 16. things that are simply invisible, altogether invisible, as it is altogether impossible that any sense, any external sense, can perceive a mind, or a thought, which is the immediate product of that mind. So, that every distribution of created things into visible and invisible, I take it, sufficiently corresponds with this that I now mention, that is, matter and mind.

And otherwise, we have the creation distinguished as to the object of it, or . eation, passively taken, into heaven and earth, as we find in that history of the beginning of the creation, Gen. i. 1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Some, indeed, that go to the cabalistical way, will have, by heavens, all intellectual beings that are created to be comprehended and meant: and by earth, all matter whatsoever. We shall not dispute the propriety of that conjecture, or what probably it hath, or hath not; but take what is more obvious to ourselves in common understanding. And if we take that as a distribution of created things, heaven and earth, as was intimated before, we must comprehend together both the *continens* and the *contenta*. And so, by heaven, must be understood and meant, not only all the several superior orbs, but all their inhabitants that do reside and dwell in them, and wherewith they are replenished, and unto which our very minds and spirits, (though now they are clothed with terrestrial vehicles and dwell in flesh,) do originally appertain and belong, as being nearer of kin, and more allied to the world of spirits, than they are allied to this world of flesh and earth, this terrestrial world. For, if we take the mind and spirit in us, to be the nobler and more excellent part of ourselves, taking our denomination from that which is more noble and excellent, we have greater affinity, according to our primitive and original state, with heaven, than we have with earth, which affinity is not to be judged by the place of residence, but by the nature of the thing. Mind and spirit are more akin to heavenly inhabitants, and they are to any thing that is made merely of earth.

And so, taking the things contained, with all the heavenly orbs, you have great diversifications, in that mentioned place, Col. i. 16. And there, indeed, the Spirit of God runs out more than it doth in the distribution of things that fall under that other head, that is, the visible things of this earth. For we are told, under the head of invisible things, (and which also in very great part, indeed, are the things which do belong to the heavens,) of thrones and dominions, and principalities and powers; which are very reasonably thought to mean so many several orders of celestial creatures that do inhabit the other world or worlds, for how many of them there are, we do not know, nor can know, as we formerly told you.

And then, if we speak of the things contained in this lower orb, signified here by earth, they do more generally fall under a common notice, and are more obvious to every one's apprehension. This world, you know, is replenished with very numerous sorts of creatures that live one way or other, or with one or another sort of lives; either, that do live an intellectual life, or live from an intelligent soul, as we do all live; or else, that live a merely sensitive life, as all the brute creatures do, of that next order below; or else, things that do live a merely vegetable life, as all the several sorts of plants that have some kind of life, though it be of a meaner and lower kind.

And then, there are all your inanimate things that have no proper life at all; that is, have no self-moving or self-acting principle within them, or peculiar to them, from whence they do act or order themselves, or are capable of being moved, as from any internal *vis* in this kind or that.

Of such extent is this created universe; it takes in all these several sorts of things. And to descend to the enumeration of more particular kinds would be an endless work, and not proper for us. But, in the mean time, we have very great amplitude in the object of our present thought and consideration, when we are to look upon the universe of created beings, that is, of created substances, look upon

all those that come under the notion of matter, and that, as such, is inanimate: matter, as matter, has no self-moving principle in it. Look upon all those things that live some kind of life or another; whether they be things of this earth of ours, or whether they be things of the superior or refined orbs and parts of the universe; these come in all the orders of angelical creatures, of which we have only that general and more indistinct account which that Colossians i. and some other passages of Scripture give us. What their diversifications are, we know not; but some or other they are, and such as do import superiority and inferiority among themselves. And then, go to that other head, of things destitute of life, and that more properly come under the notion of matter before mentioned: and so, descending downwards from the more noble and excellent creatures, to the meaner and lesser ones, what a vast scale of created being is this! descending from the highest to the lowest, or ascending from the lowest to the highest, and all within the compass of the created universe, and all this signified by that one expression in the text, "the worlds."

Indeed, all this being summed up into this one expression, of the universe of the world, taken singularly and in the largest sense of which it doth admit, we have, even within the compass of created beings, that which far exceeds any of our thoughts. And it hath been a question much agitated amongst philosophical men, whether the created universe have any created limits at all, yea or no. It hath been agitated by some with a very ill design: and some have made it their business, in moving the controversy, to hide their design. And with a strange mixture of fraud and folly, in discussing that question, Whether the created universe were infinite or no? they have gone about to disguise the matter, and told us, they would not, indeed, say it was infinite, but it was indefinite; to wit, the extent of the created universe: and by the extent of it, the meaning could not be the mere local extent, but the real; not barely what space it took up, but what of essence and real being it did comprehend and contain; and that, some of them have told us, was not infinite, but indefinite only.

But there hath been a very great mixture (as I say) of fraud and of folly: of fraud, that they have disguised their meaning, and laboured to hide it; and of folly, that in their very attempt of hiding it, they have unawares discovered a very ill meaning. And it could not but be so; for when the terms are distinguished of infinite and indefinite, I would fain know what they mean by the latter. If, by *indefinite*, they mean that which hath in itself no certain limits, then they plainly say, it is infinite, the created universe is infinite, because it hath no certain limits. But if they mean by it only, that it hath no known limits to us, that every one readily acknowledgeth; we can never know the limits of it; and so that is but to say it is finite, if they mean only so. And indeed, it is a very dubitable thing, whether any finite understanding can measure the created universe, or is capable of comprehending the extent of it. Very willing I am to aggrandize that as much as I can, in consistency, still, with owning it to be but a created thing; because still, the more we magnify that, the more we magnify the Creator. But to pretend it to be an indefinite thing in that sense, that is, that it hath no certain limits in itself, that is to make it an infinite thing.

And if it here be inquired, What is the inconvenience of that, to make it to be so, or how can we prove it not to be so? Why truly, to the former of the questions, there would be this to say, that to say it were infinite, or could be infinite, were to say that it were not a creation; for most certain it is, whatsoever is infinite is God. Infinity is the proper predicate or attribute of Deity. And so, the inconvenience would be, the taking away all the foundations of religion; for it would be the confounding of God and the creature, the taking away the difference between them. And it would be equally impossible, that there should be any room or place for religion, if you take away the subject of it, as much as if you take away the object of it. If the creature were infinite, there could be no subject of religion: and there can be no place for religion, if there be no subject of it, any more than if there were no object of it.

And as to the question, How can it be proved that the created universe is not infinite, and cannot be infinite? It is very clearly to be proved by what hath been said, in very great part: that is, whatsoever is infinite is God. Therefore, to say that the created universe is infinite, is to say, that it is not created. But besides, it may be easily evinced, that not only this universe of created beings is not infinite, but that it is impossible that it ever should be, or could be. And as the plain reason of the thing doth lie against that imagination; so, the most pernicious and destructive tendency of that philosophy that would impose upon us the imagination of an infinite universe, is most studiously to be disclaimed and abhorred, as taking away all place and room for religion. For it would confound created being and uncreated, and deify the creature; and so, leave no subject of worship, as the more avowed atheism leaves no object of it.

I shall not say more to you about the object of this said act. We are further to consider the great Agent, the Creator; and the nature of the act of creation. But let us make some stand and pause here, and consider what improvement is to be made of what hath been thus far discoursed to you. It is of very vast extent, what we are to consider under the notion of the created universe. But when all this is done, it is still but a creation; make it as great a thing as you will, magnify it as much as possible, consistently with its being a creation, and when all this is done, then say within yourselves, "All this is but as a drop, a drop of a bucket, a dust in a balance, a mere nothing, yea, lighter than nothing and vanity, compared with that Being which is of itself; that Being which owes itself to none; that Being to which it was impossible not to be;" for all this vast creation doth but depend on will and pleasure; "For thy pleasure they are and were created." It was determinable, merely upon good pleasure, whether there should be any creation, or no creation: so that one *nutus*, one *nod* (as I may speak) of the Divine Mind, either makes this vast thing, the whole created universe, to be something or nothing. "If I please, it shall be something; if I please, it shall be nothing."

It should lead us into adoration of the great self-subsisting Being, that owes it to none that he is, is beholden to none, but is by the excellency of his own eternal nature, to which it was repugnant not to be, and which comprehends all plenitude and fulness of being in itself, even an infinitude of being.

Consider this then, and when it hath prompted and led you into admiration and adoration, looking up to the great Creator, it should prompt and lead us into the greatest detestation of the insolency of creatures, even such creatures as (if they would use their minds) are capable of apprehending this, and yet take upon them as if they were absolute. They started up out of being but the other day, and at the fiat, and by the pleasure, of the great Creator; and now, they look upon themselves in this world as if it were all theirs, and as if they might do in it what they pleased. He that is the Creator of heaven and earth is also, we know, in Scripture, styled the Possessor of heaven and earth. And for a company of upstart creatures sprung up into being but the other day, to take upon them, as if they were possessors (as much as is possible for them to grasp) of this creation, and to do in it what they will; what a detestable insolency is this! It is but a dependent, borrowed right that any one hath in whatsoever he calls his own. And yet, men are apt to hug themselves in conceit of propriety, saying, "This is my own land, these are my own goods, this is my own house: and it is so by the best title a man can have." Now suppose a stranger enter your door and come into your house, and take no notice of any thing as yours, but useth all things as he pleaseth, and saith he will do what he lists in this house of yours; or (without saying so) doth what he lists, takes and uses what he will, and as he will; would you not take yourself to be highly injured, and would you not right yourself, if it lay in your power, upon so injurious an intruder as this? Why, at this rate is the great God treated and dealt with, by his apostate, revolted creatures, inhabiting this lower world, though it be even the meaner and baser parts of his creation! Creatures sprung up into being here by indulgence of divine favour, take upon them as if they were their own lords and owners, and as if every thing they lay

their hands on were their own, without ever taking notice of God; He that gave them breath and being and all things, that they might seek after him; and consider, "Whence come I? and all things that I use and enjoy, whence are they?" No such thing enters into their minds from day to day, but a life's time is run out in these bodies, wherein they should love, and serve, and adore, their great Creator, without taking notice of him.

But a more copious use of this yet remains, when we shall have opened other things that yet are to be doctrinally opened unto you.

LECTURE X.*

(2.) WE are now, in the second place, to consider the Agent in this great and mighty work, and that is, (as the text expresseth it,) God himself, that great, all-comprehending Name. There will be occasion to take notice of the way of his agency (by his word) by and by. The Creator of all things, of heaven and earth, can be no other than he who comprehends and contains all things, virtually, in his own power. But whereas, we have heretofore shown to you at large, that there is in the Deity a threefold subsistence, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, they are each of them to be comprehended under the notion of Creator here. It is a plain and self-evident truth, commonly given us as a maxim, *Opera Trinitatis, ad extra, sunt indivisa, vel communicabla;* that the works of the three persons in the Godhead towards the creature are undivided, and communicable to each of the persons: so as that we must understand them to be conjunct, in every such act as they do exert without themselves, or towards any thing that is not God. Their distinguishing actions are towards one another; but the actings that they exert towards any thing without them, these are common to them all. So that the Father creates, the Son creates, and the Holy Ghost creates. This action which, as we have told you, makes its object, and doth not suppose it, as other acts, *ad extra*, do, it is the common act of each of these. And so you find that the creation is usually ascribed to God, under that name of God (that name, being essentially taken) which comprehends all the three persons. And so we must understand that in the beginning of Genesis, where God is said to have created the heavens and the earth. And that observation is not to be slighted, that Elohim, a plural noun, is conjoined with a verb of the singular number; Barah Elohim. As if it were said, God created the heaven and the earth; that is, it is an expression to note that there is a plurality in the Deity; that is, of persons, each of which is God. But it being conjoined with a verb in the singular number, it shows that these three were but one; did agree in Deity, as well as in this creative act. And this is that which that learned man Zanchy, in his treatise, "De tribus Elohim," doth prove profitably and at large. But more particularly, when the name of God is taken,

[1.] Personally, as divers times also it is, then it signifies, eminently, God the Father: and that very term doth sufficiently express him to be the Original of all things, of all beings, both created and uncreated. He is usually, and fitly enough, said to be *Fons Deitatis et fons Trinitatis.* The Deity is first in the Father, and all created beings first and originally from him, as the matter is plainly expressed in the 1 Cor. viii. 6. To us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things. Him we are taught to adore as the great Original, from whom all being hath its rise. And yet,

[2.] We have the creation, very frequently, ascribed to the Son, speaking him conjunct with the Father in this great creative act. And even in that last mentioned place, (1 Cor. viii.) where it is said, "To us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him," it is added, "and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. And so, in that Col. i. 15, 16. his agency in the creation is most expressly asserted. He who is there said to be "the image of the invisible God, and the first-born," (as we read it, but it may as properly be read, according to grammar, with only the alteration of an accent, the first-begotten of every creature,) "by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him." There is his concurrence and conjunction with the Father, both as the efficient and final Cause of all things. So that Heb. i. 2. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed the heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." He that is "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person," by him the worlds were made. And so we have it, most expressly, in the beginning of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, (a known name and title of Christ, God's eternal Son and consubstantial Word,) that Word was in the beginning with God, and that Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." He is spoken of under a title of like import, frequently, in other scriptures, and most expressly in Proverbs viii. That is, by the name of the wisdom of God, and, under that name, is asserted to be with him, even throughout the whole work of this creation. Not with him in an idle concomitancy; which no man can understand, either according to the reason of the thing, or the plain import of the other scriptures that have been named, and many more that are to be named. He was with him, when the Lord laid the foundations of the earth, when he stretched out the heavens, when he did all that was done in the work of creation. And then,

[3.] The creation is ascribed to the Eternal Spirit, to the Holy Ghost, as you find expressly in that Gen. i. when we had been told, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and that the earth was without form and void; the Spirit of God is said to have moved upon the face of the waters;" that is, upon the fluid matter of the yet unformed chaos, that profound abyss; that Tohu and Bohu, as it is expressed; upon that fluid and yet unformed matter that was fluctuating, even as waters do: upon that, the Spirit of God did move to collect and form things out of it, according to divine pleasure.

Thus, it is plain, each person in the Godhead hath his hand and part in this great work of creation. What hand and part each hath, some are very curious in describing. But so far as the Scriptures expressly do lead us, so far we may allow our conceptions to be formed concerning their distinct agency. And it is plain,

First, That the name Father doth signify him to be the Original of all things, the first Fountain Being, the Fountain of all being, created and uncreated. The Divine Being itself is first and originally in Him, as the name Father signifies: and that comprehends the fulness of all being in itself, all excellency, all perfection, whether conceivable by us, or unconceivable. So from him the creation must have taken its rise as the Head of all things. And then,

Secondly, The Scripture speaks of the Son under the name of the eternal consubstantial word of God, or his essential wisdom, which must needs be understood to contain in itself the first idea of all things. All being originally contained and comprehended in God the Father as such, he is now said to be the visage of the invisible God, and in him do all the glories of the Deity shine, as in their first image. All things being to be created and produced into actual being according to that image which lay in the Divine Mind, which he is. As there is no one goes about to make any thing, but hath the image and idea in his own mind, first, of what he intends to make. He that intends to make a book, or to make a house, or a garment, has the idea in his own mind, first, of what he intends to make, and according to that idea all things are made. All things that were to be created, the eternal wisdom of the Father comprehending them all in himself, he is the rule or *norma*, according to which the creation is at last produced into actual being. And then,

Thirdly, The agency of the Holy Ghost may be con-

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ceived according to that light the Scripture gives concerning the distinguishing characters of that person. From the actuous love, between the Father and the Son, for an eternal production of the divine image by the Father in the Son, there cannot but be an everlasting spiration of love between the Father and this his consubstantial Image: an actuous love, and that image, containing in itself the ideas of all the things that were to be produced. This mighty power of actuous love, it goes forth to produce all things, according to this image, with the highest delectation and complacency, according to which, God pronounced concerning all things which he had made—that it was very good, and so a derivative object of divine love; all things being produced according to that excellency of his own image that was the Original Root of all things. And hereupon do other Scriptures speak of the agency of the Holy Ghost in this matter; that is, that by his Spirit he garnished the heavens; one part of the creation there spoken of. "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit and they are created," Psalm civ. 30. And so you see, that Father, Son, and Spirit, have their parts and agencies in this great work of creation. But then,

(3.) We have here to consider the act itself. You have seen the object, the worlds; and you have seen the Agent, God himself, Father, Son, and Spirit. We are now next, according to the order proposed, to consider the act that is expressed here in the text by a word, which is, fitly enough, rendered, "framed;" but we must note unto you, that that word doth *express* one sort of act, and *supposeth* another. It expresseth one sort of act, that is, the framing of things; framing (as it is fitly enough translated here) when there was somewhat now brought into being, out of which they should be so and so diversely framed, especially as to the material part of the world. That is the act here expressed. But then, it supposeth a former act, a foregoing act, and that is, the making all out of nothing, out of which any thing was after-framed. We shall speak of the act the word expresseth, first; and then shall speak of the act that word supposeth.

[1.] The word in the text is very fitly expressive of the former act, that the worlds are said to be framed. It comes of a word that signifies perfect and entire, and it seems to come from that we commonly denote by art; or, as some would have, the relation of this word to *artus*, which signifies our limbs, the limbs of any creature that is endued with life. And so they would borrow the illustration of this word from chirurgic art, that doth aptly place the bones which have been dislocated, and puts them into joint again. So the worlds were framed (as it were) by the most curious and exquisite chirurgic art; or else, that which is precedent to that, the locking and joining things into one another through the whole creation.

And in this respect, the framing of the worlds was more immediately the work of the divine wisdom, which may be meant by the expression here, that they were created by the word of God, which I told you we should take notice of in its proper place. Which may be meant not of the word spoken out, but of the internal word, agreeable to what we are wont to call *verbum mentis;* as there is no one that speaks, (if he speak sense,) but he hath in his own mind first that which he afterwards expresseth and speaks out. But herein was the wisdom of the Creator principally conspicuous; in that beautiful order and frame of things that appeared every where throughout this great universe; that there is that order that we behold daily among the heavenly bodies, in reference to one another and in reference to us; that which, in the 8th Psalm, you find the Psalmist in so high and holy an adoration of: "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained." It is a great argument of a holy heart, to be much in contemplating the divine wisdom that hath settled every thing of that order which is any where to be found in the whole creation.

If you look into this lower world, and consider that, as to what falls under our notice, there is every where that correspondency of actives to passives, of faculties to objects, as every one that will use thoughts may easily discern, the wisdom of the Creator is greatly to be adored in it. For think we with ourselves, how great a piece of vanity this creation had been, if it had not been so; if there had been objects upon which there had been no faculties to exercise; or if there were faculties to be exercised that had no objects; as if there were visible things, and no eye to see them; if there were audible things, and no ear to hear them. And so, back again, if there were eyes, and nothing to be seen; and a faculty of hearing, and no such thing as sound. But herein is the admirable contrivance of the divine wisdom in this creation manifest, that here is such a correspondency throughout, of objects to faculties, of active powers and principles to passives.

And then, in that order that is settled amongst things, therein we have the great display of the divine wisdom, there being (as hath been often said) that relation between wisdom and order, as between cause and effect. Wheresoever there is any of stated, settled order, we may be sure there was wisdom to contrive and design it. Stated and settled order cannot be a casualty. When we see the contrivance and order that are in such a thing as a watch or a clock, and the like, we are presently sure that such a thing was not made by chance. And to think that such a mighty agency, a mighty power of motion, as was once exerted in this creation, should produce things in that orderly frame wherein we behold them, without design, without wisdom, is as absurd an imagination, as if we should imagine a thousand men, by violent strokes with axes and hammers, upon brass or iron, or the like, without any design, should produce so many watches, clocks, or any such like engines; meaning no such thing.

Therefore, nothing is more to be wondered at, nor a greater argument of the degeneracy of man, or how low his mind is sunk, than that there should be any who should go into the account of the more thinking sort of men, that yet should make it their business to exclude the power of final causes out of the world; as if there were no such thing as a final cause, or an end designed, that had any influence at all upon this great creation. Whereas, if we consider the several orders and sorts of being, how useful the meanest creature, even the inanimate part of the creation, is, to very great and necessary purposes and ends; and when we consider, among those things that have life, how aptly they serve for their own purposes, and how aptly every thing in them serves their own purpose, that is, to beget and maintain that life, we cannot but see the absurdity of that conceit. To look upon the lowest sort of living creatures, the mere vegetable creatures; Why are they made with roots? but to take hold of the earth from whence by them their nutriment is drawn; that those little fibres, without which a leaf could not be nourished, should be dispersed every where throughout the whole, with so fine a texture as they are? Very well doth Cicero, a heathen, speak of nature under the name of the divine art, the art of God. And whereas, "*Boni artificis est celare artem;*" *it is the part of a good artist to conceal his art*, truly, if the divine art were not, in great part, concealed, one would think all the actions of intelligent creatures should be swallowed up in wonder, to behold the divine agency running through all things, and so variously exerting itself for the production of things as we find them, and contriving the several kinds of things in the same rank and station in the creation, into which at first they were set.

If we should look to that admirable, rare contrivance, that appears in the forming of our own bodies, upon which you find the Psalmist in that transport, "Marvellous are thy works, fearfully I am made," that is, wonderfully; "and that my soul knoweth right well," Psalm cxxxix. 14. That is, "This is a beaten subject to me, a thing that my thoughts are much used to, it is a thing about which my mind is accustomed, I know it right well:" as we know the path that we have often trod.

And not only is the divine wisdom conspicuous in this framing of things, but his goodness too. How adorable is the goodness of God, even in that frame and disposure of things that we find in the creation; that things are so framed and adapted, as to answer and correspond to one another. Here is a great appearance of the divine goodness, that whereas he hath put into such sorts and orders of his creatures, a desiring faculty, there is still somewhat in that creation to answer that faculty of desire. Every thing is, by natural instinct, taught to desire that which is good for it; that is, that which is convenient and suitable

to it. So we have the Psalmist (Psalm cxlv. 15.) admiring God upon this account, that the eyes of all things were up unto him, and that he gave them their meat in due season; a continual argument and testimony of the divine goodness. He hath not left himself, in this, without witness: the whole earth is full of his goodness, even that which the inhabitants of it replenish and fill with their wickedness and malignity against him. He doth good to all, even to the evil and the good. He hears the ravens when they cry, and they seek their meat from God; Psalm civ. which Psalm is full of expressions to this purpose. This is the munificence of the great Creator, that when he did design to replenish such and such parts of the created universe, with such and such inhabitants, creatures able to receive and entertain some correspondent and suitable good, he hath also stored the world with that good which shall answer every appetite throughout all this creation of God; so that none can be miserable, amongst even those that are rendered, by their own natures, capable of government by a law, but such as make themselves so by aversion and disaffection to their proper and suitable good. They only have it not, because they refuse it, because they are disaffected thereunto.

But then, we should come, in the next place, to speak of the second act which this expression in the text doth suppose. That which the word in the text is most expressive of, is only that sort of act by which things are adapted and suited to one another; but this supposeth a former act, by which those things, out of which things are thus framed, were themselves at first produced and brought forth out of nothing; which is creation in the strictest and most proper sense; though, indeed, there is not a word that doth exclusively signify that act in any of the learned languages. But the nature of the thing doth plainly evidence that there must be such an act. That is, look upon all uncreated being, the being of God himself, and then that which is created and made being, must have been made out of nothing; which they that will not apprehend, run into various and most manifest absurdities; one sort, thinking there must be such a thing as eternal, necessary matter; another sort, thinking that things must be made out of God as so many parts of the Deity. But I shall, on the next occasion, labour to evince to you the absurdity of any such imaginations as these.

And in the mean time, pray let us make so much of present reflection upon this great work of God's creation; that is, that he who hath made such a world as this, cannot but have both right and ability to rule it, and all things in it, to the best and most valuable purposes. And truly, I fear we do not, on this account, enough study the creation, and the attributes of the Divine Being that are exerted and put forth in that creation. There is his wisdom and his goodness to be seen in that first sort of act already spoken to.

And his power is most visible, and especially to be seen in the latter sort of act, as we shall show when we come to speak to it. But to any that would give themselves liberty of their own thoughts, one would think, they should not part, for all the world, with the consolation, that this one thing should afford us; that is, that all this vast frame of things should be produced by divine wisdom, goodness, and power, into that exquisite order in which we now behold them; and that, hereupon, he that could tell how to make such a world as this, replenished with such variety of inhabitants, knows how to govern and dispose every thing he hath made. And, as there hath been that display of those glorious excellencies, in the Divine Nature, in the frame and contexture of this whole creation, we ought hereupon always to expect, that he will, with the same wisdom, power, and goodness, regulate, govern, and dispose of what he hath so made. All these things will appear, and show themselves in the most proper seasons, without our distracting and self-tormenting cares. Let us be desirous, principally and finally, of nothing but that he who made such a world as this, for himself, and for his own glory, may, in his own way and time, have that glory out of it which he seeks and designs for himself. Yea, let us be content, that he should have it in such a way as may possibly be conjunct with our suffering many inconveniences; things that may be grievous to us, to our flesh and blood, and external sense. Should not he have his glory out of his own creation, his own way? This world was not made for us, but it was made for him, by whom it was made.

Preached July 1st, 1698.

LECTURE XI.*

[2.] But then, as I have told you, in the second place, we are now to consider, that as the expression, here in the text, doth more directly signify that one act of putting things into order, which is the native import of the word; so there is another act necessarily supposed; and that is, the bringing of things out of nothing, which are the proper, the truly proper, matter of production, or whatsoever is *extra Deum*, whatsoever is a diverse thing from the being of the Deity itself. This word, "frame," doth not signify directly this act, but it doth necessarily suppose it. Order doth suppose a subject, the things in being that are brought into that order. And as the two great attributes before mentioned, divine wisdom and goodness, do shine forth in that former act, the putting of things into order; so his power doth most eminently appear in this latter act, the bringing of the things which he so puts into order, out of nothing.

As we do not pretend to assert this act, from the import of this word that is used in the text, abstractly considered, so neither do we pretend to assert, from the native, proper force and significancy of any one word at all, that we must think appropriate to this purpose, as only to signify this act and nothing else. We do readily grant, the Hebrew and the Greek words thus rendered, are frequently used with more latitude than barely to signify the bringing of things out of nothing. And so, this act is not to be concluded from the force and import of such words, abstractly considered by themselves. Words that are of a more indefinite signification, that may signify more things than one, they are always determined to some one particular sense or other, by the circumstances of the place where they are used. There is not any one word at all, that is to be confined and limited to one certain sense by its own native import; or, at least, there are very few words that are capable of that confinement and restriction by constant and unvaried use. But what they mean in this or that saying, is to be judged by the circumstances of the discourses wherein they lie.

What of the creation is *de fide*, a matter of faith merely, we have hinted to you already, and shall further have occasion to show you, when we come to speak of that second head, how we are to come to this understanding. But, in the mean time, it is very evident, when it is said, that we are to understand this by faith, that the worlds were so and so framed, we are not to understand it exclusively, as if the meaning of the text were, to shut out every thing of argument or ratiocination in the matter. One and the same thing may be assented to, from divers different premises, as was hinted to you before. It is enough for our purpose, and even to make this which I am now speaking of a matter of faith, to wit, the producing of created things out of nothing, if it shall evidently appear, that in some texts of Scripture this must be ultimately intended and meant; and that no other thing can be, so as to exclude the necessary pre-supposition of this; and there are, undoubtedly, some texts that must be so understood, that there hath been somewhat produced out of nothing, out of which other things at length were made to arise.

As to that first text of Scripture, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Created must necessarily have this sense, at least, by an unavoidable necessity; for this making heaven and earth, being said to be in the beginning, when things took their beginning, had their first rise, it must suppose that heaven and earth were not only brought into order, but that of which they were made, was made of itself to exist, not having existed before. Otherwise, how was that the beginning of things? How was that the head of things? as the Hebrew word Resch, from whence the word Bershith, in the beginning, signifies. Otherwise, this word must assert a contradiction, that

things were begun, and not begun, at that time when God created heaven and earth.

And so, if you go forward to that first of John's Gospel, ver. 2, 3. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were created by him, (that is, God;) and without him was nothing made that was made;" every thing that was not God, was then made; all things. And, therefore, to suppose that all these made things were made out of pre-existent matter, is to suppose, that that pre-existent matter was not a thing, for all things were said to be made by him. All things beside himself were then made, therefore, matter itself was then made, out of which other things were made; unless it shall be said that matter is nothing, and, if so, we have what we seek, that is, that there are some things made out of nothing; but if it were a thing, and were not the Divine Being, as it is impossible to be, it was a self-made thing, and then made out of nothing.

And to this purpose must the explicatory proposition in the text be necessarily adapted, so that the things that are seen, were not made of things that did appear. The phenomena, (that is the word there,) things not then appearing, when the worlds were thus framed by the word of God; that is, things not before existing, for there is nothing at all that can be supposed to exist, but doth appear to some faculty or other, either divine or created. But they were things simply not appearing at all, and, therefore, not existing at all, out of which these worlds were made.

And lexicographers do take notice of that among the other senses of the word φαινομενον, that it signifies to exist. And, therefore, the worlds are said to be framed out of that which once did not exist, till it was made to exist by the divine creative power. And therefore, they foolishly think who would put a difficulty upon God in this case, such as was put upon the Israelites in Egypt, to make brick without straw; as if omnipotency could be posed, or meet with any obstruction to its designed acts, for want of matter to work upon. It was all one to him, (who calls things that are not, and makes them be as if they were, as the expression Rom. iv. 17.) whether there were the pre-existent matter to work upon or no; and the non-pre-existence can never nonplus omnipotency.

And therewith should we obviate the vain and idle question, when we hear of the worlds being framed by the word of God; "Aye, but of what were they made? made they were, but what did he make them of?" They must have, originally, been made out of what before was not, seeing it was his pleasure that they should be; for his pleasure all things are and were created, Rev. v. 9. And so, (as was said before,) if you take matter within the compass of being, it must itself be a made thing.

Now, concerning this act, the bringing of all things out of nothing, take this two-fold assertion, which we shall evince to you, and according whereunto we are to conceive of it—that it is possible to no created agent; and—that it is possible to God.

First, To all created agents, it was impossible to bring something out of nothing. It is impossible to all the power of nature, unto the power of whatsoever creature, or unto all the creatures uniting their power. I shall not trouble you with the reasonings of the schools to this purpose, by which they plainly enough demonstrate creation (that is, bringing something out of nothing) to be impossible to any creature. It is, indeed, a much disputed thing among them, whether God cannot impart his power, whether it cannot be communicated to a creature, so as that he may not make use of a creature in creation; but it is little material how that goes.

But that a creature cannot, by all its own strength, be able to bring any thing out of nothing, nor all created power put together, needs no other conviction, but an appeal even to common understanding. Nor can you conceive it any way possible for you. And if you say, "No, I cannot do it alone; but if I take in the advice, or superadded helps of such and such things, possibly we may together." Why, suppose all the power and force of all men in the world, and of all created agents besides, were to be united in one act, you cannot so much as conceive that they could produce so much as one single atom into being out of nothing. As it is equally impossible to all created power to annihilate, as to create, to reduce something back again into nothing, as to produce something out of nothing; so also is it equally possible for the divine, uncreated power to bring all things out of nothing. And then, therefore,

Secondly: We are to conceive concerning this act, as it is impossible to any created agent, so it is possible to God, and to the divine agency. For it is plain, it implies nothing of contradiction in the thing itself; that that which did not exist, should exist, as it is evident that many things do exist which did not exist. Therefore, there is no contradiction in that, what did not exist, should exist, as is is evident that many things do exist. And, therefore, to suppose it impossible to God to make that exist, which did not exist, is itself to assert a contradiction. For the notion of God doth carry infiniteness in it; you cannot form a notion of God, but it must include infiniteness. But to say that he is infinite, infinite in being, in his perfections, in his power too, and yet, that he cannot do that which implies no contradiction to be done, is to deny God to be God. It is to say, God is but a finite being, or of finite power; to say, that which you call God is not God, which is a contradiction, when you say that he cannot do that which implies no contradiction that it should be done; that is, that that which did not exist, should exist.

But admit this, perhaps you will object, that it is possible to divine agency to make something out of nothing, that doth not, however, prove that God hath now done so. There are many things possible to be done, which are not actually done. And it is no argument, from the affirmation of the power to assert the act.

To this, I only say, It is not alleged to that purpose; we do not assert the possibility of creating something out of nothing, to prove that something hath been created out of nothing; but only by way of answer to them, that would thereby prove, that something was never created out of nothing, because it is an *enunciato* affirmation, that which is impossible to be done is never actually done, though it doth not follow, that because the thing is possible to be done, therefore it is actually done. And, therefore, this is alleged only in answer to them, that do say it is simply impossible. But we prove it not to be impossible, for many things exist that did not always do so.

But we otherwise prove, that it hath actually been so, that is, that he hath made something out of nothing; that is, that we have proved it from those plain texts, that cannot but be understood in that sense. And we shall now prove it, from the gross and manifold absurdities, that they are unavoidably cast upon, who disallow something to be made out of nothing. That is, such absurdities as these; first, they must suppose this world to have been eternally, of itself, as it is; or, secondly, they must affirm there hath been necessarily self-subsisting matter from eternity; or, thirdly, they must assert, that God hath made all things out of himself, that whatsoever is made, is part of himself. But these are all of them the most manifest and gross absurdities that can be thought.

i. That this world should have been eternally as it is, without beginning. They that will pretend to say so, must first throw away all divine revelation about this matter, which manifestly asserts it never to have been eternal, but hath begun to be. But besides that, they do assert, here, repugnancies in the very nature of the thing, for they must assert the world to be as new now, as it was several thousands of years ago; that it was as old the first year, as now it is; that is, the first year in our account. Besides what is wont to be alleged by them who are for that second horrid opinion, that matter was necessarily self-subsisting from eternity; they think themselves concerned to prove the world's being from eternity, as it is; and they do so from that consideration, that then it is most unconceivably strange, that we should have no records of things, (as one of those Epicureans speaks,) elder or of a more ancient date than the times of the Trojan war, and the like. But,

ii. That which is more plausibly, and more usually, taken up in these latter times, (though it was an ancient by-gone absurdity too,) is, that there must be such a thing as eternal matter, out of which many things were brought into this frame, in which now they are: and some that will not pretend to atheism do think, that only that matter

did pre-exist, and things could not have been produced into that order and state wherein they do now appear, but by a divine agency; that is, by a divine power and wisdom running through all things, and modelling them into that form in which we do find they do now appear, and are now cast; but nothing is more obvious to them that do consider, than the gross absurdity of that opinion, that there must be such a thing as eternal, self-subsisting matter, out of which God made the worlds. For,

(i.) That would ascribe to the matter, the most fundamental attributes of the Divine Being; that is, self-subsisting or necessary existence. Nothing can be imagined more grossly absurd, than that the highest and most radical and most fundamental attribute of the Deity should be ascribed to dull and senseless matter, that is, to exist of itself, and that it should be possible to him, if he would, to reduce it to nothing: and that this prerogative should belong to every particle of matter, and that all matter being reduced into minute particles, even in our conception, then each minute particle must be in itself an independent thing, existing of itself without dependance on any thing else. Which, if it be acknowledged, then shall you have as many deities as there are minute particles of matter throughout the universe.

(ii.) This will further confute that gross conceit, that there must be any self-subsisting matter from eternity. And if there were such, it were altogether impossible that this world should be made out of it. And so it is asserted not only impiously but vainly: impiously, as it doth intrench upon a peculiar and most fundamental attribute of the Divine Being, to wit, self-subsistence; and vainly, because it were impossible this world should be made of such matter, if there were any such; for whatsoever is necessarily self-subsisting is unchangeable; that which is necessarily what it is, can never be other than it is. And it is altogether impossible that a world could be made of it, without its undergoing various changes. If it be necessarily such, of and from itself, which now it is; that which is necessarily what it is, is eternally what it is. And therefore, can never be liable to any change, not so much as that intrinsic change of motion. For suppose any minute particle of matter to be of itself necessarily, it must be some where; and if it be necessarily any where, it can by no succeeding change be any where else: and so must be simply unmovable. And then, this world could never be made of it, that is, of unmoving matter: and it must be unmoving matter, and incapable of motion, if it be of itself what it is. For if it be of itself, it must be necessarily somewhere; and if it be some where necessarily, it must be some where eternally, and can never change its place. And again,

(iii.) That opinion of eternal, necessary, self-subsisting matter, the absurdity of it is enough to be evinced from hence, that is, that the ground upon which it is asserted equally serves for the asserting of a manifest falsehood; that is, that nothing else is made out of nothing. We may as well suppose matter to be made out of nothing, as any thing else to be made out of nothing; but something else must be acknowledged to be made out of nothing. We told you, at first, speaking of the object of creation, that the universal distinction that created things are capable of, is into two heads, of mind and matter. Now, they must acknowledge minds to be made of nothing, that they are not eternally self-subsisting. And if a mind can be made out of nothing, why may not matter as well as mind? and it is plain, that (speaking of the mind of a creature) that must be made out of nothing; for it could never be made out of matter, matter being incapable of thought; and thought is the most essential thing we can conceive of in the notion of a mind. This can never, upon any terms, agree to matter; that is a material thing; as such it is impossible that that should be capable of thought, or of the power of thinking.

There is no part of matter to which that can agree, for you can conceive nothing of matter, or of the several particles of matter, but either its size, that is, being bigger or lesser; or its figure, that is, being so shaped; or its situation, that is, being in this place or that, in reference to other parts or particles of matter; or its motion to one part or another. Now, none of these can make the power of thought to be any way at all compatible to matter; for it must be grossly absurd to imagine, that if matter be of such a size, such a bigness, now it is true, being of such a size, it cannot think; but if it were a little bigger, or a little less, it could think. And then, again, if you speak of the figure of it, if it be round, it cannot think; but if it were square, or triangular, it would; how absurd is such a conception or imagination as this! So likewise, to think that motion should endow it with a power of thought is most absurd; that, being here, it could not think, but carry it there, and then it can think. Or to think that situation could give it that capacity. And you cannot think or conceive any thing of matter but one of these. Now if any of these cannot contribute to make it have a power of thought, to make a mind of it, I say, since there were minds that were not of themselves from all eternity, and could not be made out of matter, then those minds were made out of nothing. And if minds were made out of nothing, why not matter as well as minds? And that is a third consideration to evince the absurdity of that imagination of self-subsisting matter, from eternity, out of which the world must be supposed to be made. And,

(iv.) It will be further proved from hence, not only to be absurd, but blasphemous; that is, that it would make God to be a finite being. That was intimated another way before, but it will also appear this way that is now offered to your consideration. That is the only reason that is pretended, why there must be self-subsisting matter, because God cannot make something out of nothing; and so that he had not power in himself of creating matter; and then he cannot be understood to have in himself infinite power, or to be himself, virtually, the all-comprehending Being. But most certain it is, that the name God doth comprehend all; as even the significancy of that title Pan, given to the god among the pagans, did import, that he was virtually all things; that is, that there is virtually nothing which is not comprehended in the most perfect excellency of his being. And therefore, if matter be something, if it be a real something, then it must be comprehended within the virtual power of the Divine power; otherwise, that is not all-comprehending; and that it should not be so, is repugnant to the very notion of God, a Being of infinite perfection in himself. If he be such, then he comprehends this perfection in himself, the power of making matter, as it is a greater perfection, sure, to be able to do this, than to be, as to this, impotent. And then,

iii. A third absurdity, which is conjunct with no less blasphemy too, which they are cast upon who deny the creation at first, to have been out of nothing, and that is the conceit of many of the stoics of old, and which hath been taken up by some more lately, is, that God made things out of himself. Not meaning, nor referring as the efficient, as the agent, (as we all do,) but to himself as the *subjectum ex quo, the subject out of which* things were made. So that all the creation, and the greatest sorts of creatures, they are several parts of God, so and so diversified. But to this, nothing more needs to be said than,

(i.) That the Divine Being is simple, impartible, uncapable of division into parts: it is inconsistent with the perfection of God, that it should be otherwise: and,

(ii.) The Divine Being is the most perfectly spiritual Being, the most purely and perfectly spiritual; and therefore material things were never made out of it. For it is altogether as impossible to turn a spirit into matter, as it is to turn matter into spirit.

Something I would say by way of *Use*, before I go off from this head, and proceed to the other, the manner, here as ascertained how we come by this notion of the creation; that is, faith. Pray make this reflection, upon what hath been already said: If this creation could originally come out of nothing, then let no doubt, I beseech you, trouble your minds about a new creation. Did God, at first, make heaven and earth, or make the worlds out of nothing? Sure he can as easily make a new world out of that ill state of things in which we now behold them, as he did the whole world, as now it is, out of nothing. If you will say, There are no appearances looking that way: if there shall be a new heaven, and a new earth, how can we admit that thought, when there are no appearances tending thereunto? Why, this world was first made out of things that did not

appear. There were no appearances as to the creation of this world before it was made: what if there be no appearance, nay if there be contrary appearances, if things look quite another way, and with a quite contrary face and aspect? What is all that to Him who, at first, made heaven and earth with a word? It would greatly facilitate our faith, if we did this, if we did but consider these two things: first of all, the greatness, and secondly, the facility, of this work of God. The greatness of it, so vast a thing and so great a thing as this world is; and the facility of his doing: he spake and it was done; as the Psalmist expresses it; *Dictum factum*, as soon as it could be spoken, Let such a thing be! and it was; "Let there be light, and there was light;" Let there be heaven and earth, and they were. So to make a new heaven, and a new earth, when the season thereof comes, is equally easy, as all things are equally easy to Him that can do all things.

LECTURE XII.*

BEFORE we proceed to the next head, it remains only to consider somewhat that is wont to be *objected*, by such as too much indulge a litigious temper and disposition of spirit, against the one and the other of these acts; the putting things into this order wherein we find them, and the bringing of things into being that were nothing before.

I. There are that do *object* against that act, which is here expressed in our English, by the name of framing of worlds, the putting things in them into the order which we now behold. That is, it is objected, that if this order which we see in the universe, were the effect of divine wisdom and design, it would be certainly much more accurate than we find it; things would be done with more exactness, there would not be so many defects as we see in the universe. It seems not to be congruous (such do imagine) to the wisdom of God, that he should undertake the settling of an order in this creation, and that it should, in such respects as have been mentioned, and many other, be liable to so much exception. And to this, there are several things to be said. As,

(1.) That it is very true, indeed, the order of things would be more exact and accurate than it is, if it had been God's design to make every creature, and the whole frame of things, as perfect as he could have made it. But we have no reason to imagine that that was any thing of his design. He did not make it to answer our purpose, but his own, all being to run into an eternal state of things at last, and this temporary state to be of short continuance. And therefore, let such as do think there should have been greater exactness and accuracy in this frame of things, (if this will not satisfy them,) sit down and wonder, that when it was intended, one time of another, such creatures as they should be raised up into being in the world, that God did not put things into better order for their entertainment, that he did not make every thing more exactly to answer their fancies, appetites, and humours. But,

(2.) It is enough to the purpose here asserted, that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, by the Eternal Logos, that did predetermine the order of things, and by a powerfully exerted word, in the time and season, when things were to exist and come forth into being. I say, it sufficiently answers what is here asserted, if it doth appear that all things were done with design, and so as that they could not be done by any wisdom or power less than divine. This is enough for our purpose, that there are characters of design upon the whole frame of things; but that such a design as this could never have been laid, nor could ever have been effected by any created wisdom or power whatsoever, for the wisdom we see in the contexture of the things which we behold, is no where, in the creature, accompanied with power capable of doing such things. Not to speak of things in particular, if you do but consider these two properties of things that are framed and made, either first, the magnitude of some, or the parvitude of others; (only to instance in those two;) as it is manifest there was a design, so it is equally manifest that no created agent could have done any thing like either of these. Either,

[1.] As to magnitude: the magnitude of the universe, what created agent could have made so vast a fabric as heaven and earth, as "the worlds?" which is the expression in the text. All created agency must confess itself outdone. Nothing is left us upon that account to consider, when we ask the question, How came there to be such worlds? It is resolvable by nothing else, but that the worlds were framed by the word of God. And then,

[2.] On the other hand, if you do but consider the parvitude of things, the many multitudes of things that have life: no created agent can contrive or do any such thing. Multitudes of little creatures, in the kinds of them, too little to be seen by our naked eye, but that by instruments may be seen to have their respective motive powers. And those that are capable of dissection, that there should be as many parts observable, for the several functions of life, in some of the minutest insects, as are to be found in an elephant. It is plain, that a wise design there was in the framing of things as they are made, and that it is altogether impossible it should be done by any other but a Divine agent, whether you consider the magnitude or the parvitude of things that are made. And again,

(3.) There is this further to be considered as to this objection, that in looking upon, and taking notice of, the works of God, we are not to consider them abstractly and severally, but we are to consider them as parts of one entire whole, and in their reference to that. As a heathen philosopher, among the Greeks, tells us, "If we should make a judgment of the whole work of creation by this or that less comely part of it, it were the same thing as if one would give an account what sort of creature man is, and take for instance and example, such a one as Thersites, or one of the most deformed of all men, and so give an account of the structure of the human body by such a one, that there would be as little cause of cavil, as he would have with a picture drawer, who should find great fault with him that he put not bright colours every where, that there are, any where, dark shadows to be found." This, and much more to this purpose, is discoursed by a heathen, for the vindication of God as to this thing, that there should be any thing of defect, or not the most absolute perfection, to be found in every creature that we can look upon. And again,

(4.) It is further to be considered to this purpose, that we are to consider the time and texture of things in this universe, not barely as now it is, but as at first it was, and to consider this inferior part of the creation, which was made for the use and service of man, was in its original state, when he was in his original state: that man for whom all this lower world appears to have been made, is become a degenerate creature, an apostate creature. And that, as he is gone very far from his original, things are very far gone from their original, in which they were made for him. The frame of this world is not like what it was. What changes there were in it for the sin of man, before the flood, we know not. But that must have inferred a universal change in all this earth. And we find, as to the point of longevity, things have altered apace, and did gradually alter in that respect. So as in a short compass of time, in comparison, lives of seven or eight hundred years, or more, were come to sixty or eighty years, a very great, and hardly a tolerable age, all labour and sorrow. That sickness and mortality are come into this world, it is true; but who brought them in? They were sinners that introduced them. It is sin that hath so slurred the creation of God, as to that noble creature, and as to the subservient creature, proportionally. And,

(5.) It is further to be considered too, that God hath since the first creation of things, settled an ordinary course of nature in the world, which ordinarily he doth not invert or alter, but for some very great purposes. As when, now and then, a miracle is to be wrought; otherwise, usually, he doth not interpose to change the course of nature, but lets things run on according to the tendency and current of second causes.

(6.) In the last place, as to this objection, this is further

* Preached July 8th, 1692.

to be considered, that this is more an argument, that the order we find in things should proceed from God, that there is not such an accuracy in every punctilio to be beheld, than if it were so: that is, it is more suitable to the divine greatness. There is this, among men, to be observed, that according as they are of greater minds and spirits, they do less concern themselves about light and trivial matters. And they reckon a kind of rational neglect to be greater, to have more in it of majesty, more that doth beseem a great man and a great mind. They are little minds that do minutely concern themselves about trifles and small matters.

2. But again, there lies matter of *objection*, with some, against the other of these acts. The former, his putting things into order, the latter, his putting things into being. And with this, the objection that lies with divers, and hath done in latter and former ages, is the authority of that maxim, *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*, that nothing can come out of nothing, and therefore, there can have been no such thing as a mere creation; which (as I told you) the act supposed, the act of framing of things; the order of things doth suppose the being of them. But this, say they, could never be, that that which was nothing should become something; for common reason doth allege, that out of nothing nothing can be made, nothing will be nothing still, everlastingly.

But to them, I have only two things to *answer*—that herein they do mistake the maxim that they rely upon, and—that they contradict themselves

(1.) That they mistake the maxim, upon the authority whereof they pretend to rely, that nothing can come out of nothing; for it can only imply these two things—that it is impossible for any thing to come out of nothing by itself, and—that it is impossible that any thing should come out of nothing by a created agent. In both these senses, the maxim is most certainly true.

[1.] That it is impossible, that any thing should come out of nothing of itself: that is evident to every understanding that reflects and considers. If we should but, in our own supposition, imagine, that there were nothing now at all in being of one kind or another, it is certain that to all eternity there would never be any thing in being; as we have had occasion to argue to you heretofore. We find that somewhat now is, and therefore, we are sure that something hath always been: for if there were any time when there was nothing, to all eternity there would be nothing. Because it is impossible that something should ever itself arise out of nothing. In that sense, the maxim is most indubitable; that it is impossible that something should arise out of nothing. And,

[2.] It is equally indubitable in this sense too, that a created agency, or all created agency put together, if it were all to be exerted into one act, could never raise something out of nothing. But to bring the authority of this maxim against the omnipotent agency of the supreme and sovereign Cause, is the most absurd collection that can be thought. As if we could measure the divine agency by that of the creatures. It might every whit as well be said, that because a child newly born, cannot build a house or a city, that therefore, it can never be done, no agency could ever do it: and the difference is infinitely greater between God's agency and any creature, than between that of the meanest and weakest creature, and that of the mightiest that can be supposed. This is to circumscribe omnipotency, and to deny omnipotency to be omnipotent, which is a contradiction. What greater contradiction can there be, than to deny a thing of itself, to say there is any thing that is not what it is? But it is no contradiction, that that which was not, should be made to be, that that which did not exist, should exist, and so to bring something out of nothing; for that is within the compass of the object of Almighty power. And then, I *answer*,

(2.) As they that do so object, do most manifestly contradict the truth, so it is equally evident that they contradict themselves, in giving the account they do give of the original of things, such as it is. There are two sorts of them.

[1.] There are some, first, that will have all substance to be one, (such as Spinosa and his followers,) and so to be uncreated, and that there is nothing created but the modifications of things. But as to them, I inquire whether these modifications were in that substance before, yea or no? If they were before, then they were not produced, and so nothing is produced. But if they were not in that substance before, (which they imagine,) and yet be something, (as they cannot pretend them to be nothing,) then this something is throughout of nothing: and they cannot but be compelled to own so much. And we find it actually to be, for we find things are modified so and so. And then,

[2.] There is a second sort, who do not make all substance to be self-existent and eternal, but only matter, as the passive subject, which the eternal, unmade mind doth work upon.

But even they also must be constrained to contradict themselves. And it will appear most evident, that they do so, the matter being pursued: for a mind is not made of matter; there is no kind of cognation between a particle of matter and a thought, and so between the whole of matter and of mind. A mind can never be made of matter, or out of matter. But there are minds that are made; our own, theirs, if there were any that were not always; and then, they must be made out of nothing, for out of matter they cannot be made. And so, as to that objection, the objectors are manifestly found, both to contradict the truth, and to contradict themselves; and we need concern ourselves no further with them.[a]

LECTURE XIII.*

Secondly. The second general head we now come to is, how or by what principle we are to understand all this. And for that, the text tells us, it is by "faith" that we are to understand it. How come we to know that this vast universe, these worlds, (which how many they are we cannot tell,) did all spring up into being by the word of God? How come we to be informed, or how are we informed, of all this? Why, it is by faith. Here, it is requisite to show how this is to be taken, that we are by faith to understand the worlds to have been created by the word of God. Why,

It is not to be taken exclusively, as if it were to be understood no way but by faith. It is plain, and hath been made plain, that it may be understood by reason too. And there is no prejudice at all in it, that the same conclusion should be capable of being proved by more arguments than one; and by more sorts of arguments than by one sort. Nothing is more ordinary, than to bring many arguments of one sort, of those we call artificial arguments, to prove the same conclusion: many such arguments may be useful to serve one and the same purpose: and it is no more inconvenient, and incongruous, that there should be arguments of more sorts than one, to prove the same thing, than that there should be many arguments used of one sort. Therefore, this is not to be understood exclusively, that we are to have the notice of the worlds being made by the word of God no way at all but by faith; or that we are to understand this by faith only: that the text doth not say, and we are not to take it so. But,

We are to take it thus, that is, that we are to understand this by faith more advantageously; not exclusively, but with much more advantage than by any other way alone. My meaning is, that having plain, rational evidence of the creation, (as indeed we have such as is irrefragable, and as no mind which considers can withstand,) then, it is a great superadded advantage, to understand the same thing by divine revelation too. It adds a great deal, to have the matter so stated, that I may also understand this by faith, that the worlds were made by the word of God.

And, I shall now show wherein this great superadded advantage lies; and wherein, if we compare the two ways

a Several things, by way of use, were at this time inferred; but the enlargement thereof, being on the entire use made on this act of God; what was now said is to be found in the Lecture preached December 28th, 1698. Vide page 1065.

* Preached November 29th, 1698.

of understanding this by reason, and of understanding it by faith, this latter way hath the advantage, even of the other. For, first, we understand more of it by faith, than we can by reason; and, secondly, what we understand by faith, we understand better.

1. We understand more of it by faith, than by mere rational indagation or search we could understand. We have a more circumstantial account of very important, considerable circumstances of this creation, as faith represents the matter to us, out of God's own revelation, than by rational disquisition we could have had. We understand within what limits of time, and we understand in what order, this work of creation was performed, by faith. Reason could never have informed us of either of these.

(1.) We understand within what limits of time this work was done, that is, that all was absolved within the space of six days: no reason could ever have informed us of that. But it signifies much towards the liveliness of any representation, that the matter be represented in its circumstances. Reason, in the gross, could only have informed us generally, that all these things which do appear, are not of themselves, and were, some time or other, raised up out of nothing, by an almighty, creative power; but it could never have informed us within what limits of time such a mighty work as this was done. But our faith in the divine revelation informs us of that too. And then,

(2.) It informs us of the order in which things were produced, which no reason could ever have informed us of, or found out; that is, that on the first day, there being nothing at all but a disorderly chaos, (which must have been supposed first raised out of its primitive nothing,) that God causeth a glorious light to spring out of that horrid darkness, that had every where spread itself over this chaos, this vast confused heap. He did but say the word, "Let there be light, and it was so."

And then, it informs us, that on the second day, God ordereth a firmament, dividing the waters, or the fluid matter that was superior, made up of finer particles, from that which was inferior and more gross: the one, being designed for a nobler kind of use, and the other, for meaner services and purposes.

And then, we are informed, again, that on the third day, God made, in this inferior world of ours, dry land and sea to appear, severally divided, and separate one from another, and distinct. And, that, as to the dry land, God doth implant in it the seminal principles of all sorts of vegetation, to make it capable of serving its after uses and purposes.

And then, on the fourth day, all these glorious lights are made to appear, and shine forth in the firmament, that are ever since observable and conspicuous in the world.

And then, on the fifth day, he replenisheth this earth with all those sorts of sensible animals that we find it inhabited with, and by which they are so much the more to be fitted for the habitation and use of man.

And then, on the sixth day, he makes man, and brings him forth into this orderly and so well prepared world; all things being fitted and accommodated to his use and purpose, as was most suitable and congruous? and gives him dominion over all; as the matter is so copiously, and with admiration of God, represented to us in that 8th Psalm.

And then, that having thus, in six days, absolved and finished all this great and glorious work, he now sanctifies, and hallows, and blesses the seventh day. The Lord himself, (as it were,) resting with complacency in the view of his own work, finding it to be good, and answering to the complete, eternal idea which lay in his own all-comprehending mind. He beholds, with complacency, all that he had done, and so takes up that satisfying rest that was suitable to a God, in the contemplation of his own work. He did it with delight and pleasure; and now beholds it with delight and pleasure done. And so, takes man (the creature, here in this lower world, which he had made capable thereof) into communion and participation with him, in this blessed rest of his: upon which is founded the law of the sabbath.

Now, all these things that could not otherwise have been known to us, but by divine revelation, and our faith therein, God, telling us that things were so, and so, and we believing him, and relying on the truth of his word therein, he did graciously provide that those things should be made manifest; that they should be made known to the children of men, in succeeding times, by casting all into sacred records. Though that, indeed, were not done till a considerable time after this beginning of all things; yet, till it was done, the knowledge of these things was more easily transmitted or conveyed; three or four men, having seen all from the beginning of the world, and so were capable of telling one another, until the time when these things were capable of being transmitted into sacred records; these records themselves giving an account of those particulars that were transmitted, from hand to hand, by three or four of those that lived, successively, nearest to the beginning of time, who seeing and knowing, might tell one another.

And we have these notices, all of us, from God, that thus these worlds began. And, indeed, if such a notification of these things did but now first arrive to us; if there were but one such manuscript in being, that should give this account of the first rise and production of all things, and it were sufficiently attested and proved to be divine, of how great value and account would it be? Your great antiquaries, that have been so highly pleased in searching into the ancientest original of things, what would not one of them have given for such a monument of antiquity as this, informing us distinctly, from point to point, how all things came into being, and in that order wherein they now lie to our notice and view? The price thereof would be above that of rubies, and all that could be desired would not be compared therewith.

That is one thing, whereby this understanding, by faith, the creation of the world, hath its advantage over any other way of coming to the knowledge or notice of it: that is, that we know more of it, by faith, than we could do any other way. And,

2. What we do know, we know better. It is a better way of knowledge, or we may know better this way, to speak of the one and the other, comparatively, in several respects. As,

(1.) It is an easier way of knowledge, than that of rational search and disquisition. There must, in order to that, to know things so, be usually a laborious inquiry into the reference of one thing to another. There must be an adaption of a frame and series of consequences and deductions; some whereof may be more obscure, but leads us gradually into clearer light, step by step. This is a more painful way of understanding things: it requires a very great exercise of mind to know many things by the deduction of a long series of consequences, one following upon another; and which the minds of men, generally, are less apt for, in this low and lapsed state of man. But how easy a thing is it, to have such a matter told us, by One who, we are sure, will not deceive us, and cannot deceive us! and then, to believe it, and take his word that so it is! This brings us to a satisfaction about this matter presently, and with the greatest facility. It is true, indeed, that as to this particular point of the creation, the matter is most plainly demonstrable, and very soon, to any capable and apprehensive mind: but if men were left to themselves, though they may be capable of discerning things represented to them in their dependencies one upon another, they would not so easily find it out of themselves; and, therefore, as this is far the more easy way of knowing, so,

(2.) It is a way, too, by which the thing may be more commonly known: so far as the divine revelation doth obtain and extend, it may be more commonly known. Very true, as I told you, it may be demonstrable, most plainly, to an intelligent, apprehensive, unprejudiced person, that this world was raised up out of nothing, by divine power. But as there are few that have ever made it their business, so far to cultivate their minds, as to be capable of demonstrating this to themselves; so there are few, that have opportunity of consulting with those, who will take the pains, (having acquired so much knowledge themselves,) as to make such a demonstration to them; so as that, with the most, it goes but as a matter of opinion. But few, if they were put to it, are able to prove that this world had its rise thus, at first. But now, if it be to be believed, as a matter of divine revelation, so far as that divine revelation doth obtain, every one may presently be informed; and so this knowledge would become as much more com-

mon, as it is much more easy:—every one can read, or hear this read, to wit, the account that Scripture gives concerning the original of things: and so this knowledge, by this means, shall not be confined to a few, as it would be confined to a few, if none could come to the knowledge but those whose minds are sufficiently cultivated, so as to be capable of demonstrating this to themselves, or of apprehending well the demonstration made of it by others. And again,

(3.) It is a much clearer and more satisfying way, as well as it is more easy and more common. When the understanding of this matter is grounded this way, it is more satisfying to the mind; it makes things much more clear. They are but dark, and confused, and indistinct notices that we could have had in a rational way, of the beginning of things. But to be told this, from point to point, how all things were produced at first, and brought forth into that being, and order, wherein we behold them; what a satisfaction is it to an inquiring mind, to have such notices of these things!

How much hath the matter been otherwise, with those that have been destitute of divine revelation, in this matter, and who could not discern the state of this affair by faith! How conjectural have their apprehensions been, and how wild and exorbitant their conjectures, even concerning their own beginning! Man is nearest to himself: and if one would inquire concerning the beginning of things, one would inquire first of all, and chiefly, How did we begin? How came it first to be, that there should be such a creature as man here in this world? Those that have not had the help of divine revelation, so as to be capable of understanding the matter by faith, as their apprehensions have been conjectural, so their conjectures have been the most strangely disorderly, inordinate, that could be thought; some imagining, that men were thrust out, at first, in little bags out of this earth, having been formed there; others have apprehended, that they were begotten in the bellies of fishes, (these were the conjectures of the great philosophers in the former ages of the world,) and by those fishes exposed and thrown out upon the earth. But to have an account given us, by the word of God, so plainly, how satisfying it is to the mind of an inquiring man! All dubious hallucinations about this matter, come now to be decisively and plainly represented, so as here is no more place left for dubious and uncertain conjecture in the case. But this was the determination of heaven; and according to the determination of heaven, the thing was done. "Let us now make man;" and so God made man: "In his own image male and female created them." Here is an expedite, clear, and satisfying account how we had our beginning. And then,

(4.) This way of understanding, by faith, the beginning of things, the creation of all things, is much more impressive; which is the greatest and most important thing of all the rest. It is more easy; it is more common; (where divine revelation obtains;) it is more satisfying; and, lastly, more impressive; more apt to make deep, and suitable, and useful impressions upon our mind and heart. By faith, we understand, that is, to make the thing enter into our souls. That notice of such a thing, of so great importance to us, which is by faith, transforms the subject; moulds it into a suitable frame towards the Creator, towards itself, and towards its fellow-creatures, especially those of the same order and kind. Here will be corresponding impressions made by faith: whereas, mere rational knowledge of the same things, makes very little, or that that is, at best, but faint and languid.

And the matter is very plain, that till faith comes, it is but an empty, notional knowledge, which people have of God's Creatorship and of their own creatureship; of God, as their Creator, and of themselves as his creatures. It is but a slight, superficial knowledge that any have of these things, till faith comes: that carries a transforming power with it, so as to work the truth revealed, and believed, into the very inwards of our souls. And it is more impressive, the knowledge and understanding even of this matter, which comes by faith, upon several accounts.

[1.] Because the ground of this my faith, is distinctly and immediately divine. I believe such a thing, as God reveals it, because it is reported to me upon the authority of God, which carries a mighty awe with it upon the soul, and so makes the thing revealed and believed the more impressive. I attend to God in the matter, the authority of God. If I believe such a thing, with a divine faith, it strikes my soul, and carries the matter to my heart. And again,

[2.] The notice that I have by faith, of these things, is very agreeable to an apprehensive mind; and so it enters in the more. Look to the matter really, as it is revealed, and the substance of the divine revelation, concerning this matter, is congruous, and suitable to the mind and spirit of a man. There lie no unanswerable exceptions against it. The knowledge that comes by rational inquiry, and search, admits of objections; when the matter is to be wrought out by mere ratiocination, there will be reasons *pro* and *con*; arguments on the one hand, and arguments on the other hand; and many things that may seem reasonable to one, will not seem reasonable to another. But, as to what we are here required to believe about this matter, or what is matter of faith in this case, there is nothing in it but what is very congenerous to an apprehensive and unprejudiced mind, that is willing to know the truth of things. It may be, there is what should never have been found out, or known, if it had not been told: but to a considering mind, the thing appears to be just as it is told it is. I should not have thought of it before; but now I am told of it, it is very agreeable it should be so. And things do impress the more, accordingly as they are more suitable to them, they are the more easily received, there is less of obstruction lies against them. And,

[3.] The notice we have of such things by faith, is the most impressive, for that this very faith itself is a divine principle, immediately divine, implanted, inwrought into the heart by the Divine Spirit. We find faith reckoned among the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22. And we read of such a thing as the spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13. The Divine Spirit, when it comes to new-create, to raise the new creation, amongst all the necessary principles of the divine life that are now to be implanted in this new creature of God, there is faith, that great receptive principle by which it is to take in all light and gracious influences from him. The very principle itself is from God; and therefore, the discoveries that are made by it, must needs be so much the more deeply impressive upon the soul, because, that faith by which the impression is made, is immediately a divine thing. And then,

[4.] If you look to the act of faith, or its more immediate and connatural effect, it must be more impressive: faith, being described by its most appropriate act, or by its immediate effect, is called, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen:" expressions that represent faith to us as looking forward and backward, as what goes so immediately before the text in this same chapter. Hope, that always refers to somewhat future, is that by which we have the prospect of futurities; faith is the substance of those hoped for things, those futurities; that is one expression of the work of faith, to substantiate future things that we do but hope for. And, then, there is another work of it, or its work is otherwise expressed: it is, "the evidence of things not seen:" and that is larger and more extensive, and represents faith to us as a principle that can look backward as well as forward. We do not see how this world was raised out of nothing: no matter for that, we can believe it; faith will be to us the evidence of that we never saw, or have not seen: faith will (as it were) place us upon the verge of this world; and let us see, as if we had stood by, when God did, in this orderly way, raise up this creation, part by part, out of a disorderly chaos, and heap of confusion, wherein all things lay. If we have that obediential subjection to the divine authority, revealing things, (which subjection faith doth involve and carry in it,) this faith serves us instead of eyes; doth the same thing (being the evidence to us of things not seen, or of what we never saw) as if we had been by as spectators, when God was doing this great and mighty and noble work; one thing rising up after another into view before our eyes. Faith shows all this with evidence, and, therefore, is much the more impressive; so that, after the hearing of such a discourse as this, if it be entertained by faith, we should go

away with hearts deeply impressed, having God in all the glorious excellencies of a Creator in view before our eyes; and our own spirits formed as dutiful, loyal, dependent, subject creatures, all full of adoration and praise; so as continually to behold him, and his fulness, filling all in all, which way soever we look or cast our eye: and that is the general use indeed which is to be made of all this.

LECTURE XIV.*

AND now, it is the particular *Use* of the whole which we are next to come to. And you see the heads of discourse, hitherto, have been two; and so we shall have two things to improve by way of use, that is, first, that we are to understand the worlds to have been made by the word of God; and, secondly, that we are to have this understanding by faith. Each of these do claim their distinct improvement. And,

1. For the former. This is a matter to be understood, that these worlds were made, created; that this great universe which comprehends all the worlds, (we do not know how many the text means; but we noted to you, that it is not the dual number that is used here, but the plural,) is, most undoubtedly, a made thing. That the worlds were made, this we do understand. And we learn from thence,

(1.) That the world was not eternal, that it had a beginning. This hath, on the by, been hinted before, and we have formerly proved this to you in itself; and, I think, sufficiently. We now consider it as an inference, that, because it hath been created, therefore, it was not eternal; therefore, it some time began. Indeed, this inference hath been doubted, and disputed by philosophers, whether it were good and strong, yea or no, that, because the world hath been created, therefore, it cannot have been eternal, but must have begun. Some have imagined, that it might be dependently eternal, notwithstanding its being a created thing. Some such as grant it to be a creature, have yet imagined also, that it might be, in a way of dependance, eternal. But in truth, the question would only need to be distinguished, and then it would be soon and easily answered: for that supposed dependance upon a cause, might be understood to be, either upon a necessary cause, necessarily acting and producing such an effect, or upon an arbitrary cause. If we should suppose this world to have been from God, as the necessary producer of it, that would make this world itself to be a necessary being, and would be simply inconsistent with its being a creature. All necessary being must be divine, must be God; whatsoever is necessarily, can be no other than God. But if it be meant of dependance on God as an arbitrary cause, considering an act of the divine will to intervene; that is, that it was his perfect choice whether the world should be, or not be; so it is impossible it can have been eternal, dependently eternal, if the matter were determinable by divine pleasure. Shall this be, or not be? that supposeth it some time not to have been. It supposeth a *transitus* from not being to being; but that it is impossible it should be eternal; for there can be no change in eternity. That of which eternity is spoken, must have been always what it is, and as it is. Therefore, nothing can be more manifest, than that this world began: its being depended upon the divine word, upon his pleasure: for that is the notion that the Scripture gives of the creation; "for thy pleasure all things are and were created," Rev. iv. 11.

And that should be a measure to us, how we are to conceive of this universe of things. Be it, or they, (the things contained in it,) as great as we can imagine; let our thoughts be enlarged and raised as much as is fit, or they are capable of, upon such a subject,—the greatness and vastness of this universe; yet presently think, once this was all nothing, raised up out of nothing, sprang from nothing. It is a mighty disgrace upon created being, once to have been nothing. This is a disgrace upon created being, which it is fit it should bear; all shrinking into nothing before him who is the *All*. Magnify it to yourselves as much as you will or can, yet presently think it back into nothing; great it is indeed; but once it was nothing; mere nothing. It began to be, and therefore there was a vast immense duration wherein it was not, wherein there was no such thing.

And, moreover, the worlds, in that frame wherein we behold them, cannot have been eternal; for it would be the most absurd contradiction, and nonsense, imaginable, to say, that in this changeable state, wherein things are, they could be from eternity. It is a manifest contradiction to the understanding of any body, that would use his thoughts, that there should be eternal changes. And pray consider it. It may seem a little dark and obscure to you at first hearing, but stay a little upon it in your thoughts, and there is not any here of so mean capacity, but if they would use their thoughts a little, they may easily apprehend it impossible that there can be such a thing as an eternal change. Now there is in this world a continual succession, and a succession of changes. As to things that have life, to instance, there we see a continual succession of living and dying amongst all things that have life, and come under our view from day to day. But it is altogether impossible that there can have been such changes from eternity; for there can be no death, but there must have been life before: nothing can be said to die, that did not live. But to suppose any such change from eternity, an eternal change from life to death, it is a contradiction in itself; one must be first in its place; life must be first; and if life were eternal, it could never die; what lies under the measure of eternity must be always as it is. *Æternum non patitur novum*, there can be nothing new in eternity. And again,

(2.) As it is manifest, that this universe, these worlds, were not eternal, but began to be; so it is also manifest, that it did not begin to be by any kind of chance or fate. Some, who have admitted this world not to have been always what it is, in that order we behold it, yet thought, that it came by a sort of casualty into this state we now see it. That matter having always been of itself, (as they absurdly imagine,) they have thought that the eternal motion of this matter, the various rollings to and fro, of it, have at last produced this strange and orderly frame of things which we behold. But nothing is more plain, than as this world is a late thing, in comparison; for there was a vast, immense duration wherein it was not; and in comparison of which it is but lately come into being: so that, when it did come into being, it was brought forth, into that being, by a designing cause.

The word, in the text, is emphatically enough expressive of that; it was brought into that exact and accurate order, wherein we see things lie, designedly, as the Greek word here used implies; as the several parts and limbs of a body are joined together, so as to consummate and make up one orderly frame. Order is the effect of design; wisdom is the parent of order. To behold that orderly frame of things which is observable to every eye in this universe of created beings, doth sufficiently show, that it was not chance, but most profound wisdom, that hath brought things into this state wherein they are.

That is most plain; that is, if the worlds were made, they are not eternal, but did begin; so that they did not begin without design. The wisdom of him that did design this orderly frame of things, ought to be discerned, acknowledged, and adored; and a continual disposition of heart to adore it ought to be habitual to us, and often going forth into actual exercise. It hath been the constant frame of holy ones of old, and we should take heed of letting it be an alien thing to us, "Lift up thine eyes on high, and consider; Who hath made all these things," that we behold, in so much lustre, and beauty, and glory, over our heads? who hath made them, and produced all the hosts of heaven, and called them by name? "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands," (saith the Psalmist,) when I do, (it implies he did it often, that it was his wont,) then, I say, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Look to such places as I relate to, that Isaiah xl. 26. and Psalm viii. throughout, and many more. It should be more our business to contemplate and admire the unsearchable wisdom of God, in the creation of this world. The

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great exercise and argument, it is of a holy heart, that wherein it doth exercise itself, and by which it discovers itself to be such. Again,

(3.) We may learn hence, the meanness and poverty of all creature-being, even upon the account of its being such; created and made. The worlds were made. As that doth argue them all, once, not to have been, so it argues them still to be next to nothing, continually depending. What was not of itself, cannot continue to be by itself; that which was drawn forth out of nothing, by an almighty power, still needs the continual exercise of the same power, to keep it from a relapsing, and sliding back into nothing again; which otherwise it must soon do. Sin being come into the creation, there needed a mediator for this purpose, that all might not be thrown back into nothing again; "By him all things consist," Col. i. 17. It is he that upholds and bears up the pillars of a tottering world; even where it was not obnoxious to justice, to a divine *nemesis*; yet, as being created, the mere liability, its dependableness, (which is proper to all created beings as such,) must have rendered it continually liable to relapse into nothing, if not continually upheld.

You see hence, therefore, by the way, what an ungodly creature hath to trust in; what he hath for the final object of his trust, to wit, that which is every moment ready to *mutare*, to drop into nothing, to go out of being, that is only sustained momentarily by him that made it. This is all that a wretched soul, that is off from God, hath to rely upon, to trust in; nothing but creature; nothing but that which itself is next to nothing; all such a one's dependance is upon that which doth itself too, depend. He that hath not a God to trust, to rely upon, what doth he depend upon? Let him but name it to you; be it what it will, God it is not. Alas! mistaken man! thou dependest upon that which depends itself; and how miserable a case art thou in! Indeed, the vanity of creature dependance, is obvious to every man's thoughts, that will but allow himself to think. But the wickedness of it is but a little thought of; few think of that. Any man may apprehend how vain a thing it is to place confidence in a creature that is next to nothing; but it enters into the minds of but few to consider how wicked a thing it is. You must know, that to be the final Object, is the divine peculiarity of the Deity; and one of the highest, and most appropriate; a glory that he will not impart. As to be prayed to, to be invocated, that is but secondary to this of his being trusted in; we trust first, and then invocate. This is a glory that he will not give to another. It is a homage due to Deity, which belongs to God alone, to be, I say, the final object of trust; he, into whom my trust doth ultimately resolve. I know there may be a subordination; you may trust in a friend, in a relation; but for the final, supreme Object of trust, it is the highest, supreme worship of the Deity, to be laced only upon him.

And therefore, it doth not only infer misery by disappointment, when a man trusts in a creature; but it infers a curse by revenge. It is not only an infelicity, that doth befall a man in such a case, when he doth expect that which is not to be had, from that which affords it not; but it is a wickedness that is followed with a divine curse, with a just *vindicta*, for a wrong and injury done to him: that is, that I place upon a creature that which is peculiar and belongs to him alone; and so, I do not only punish myself as a foolish, mistaken creature; but God punisheth me as a sinful, guilty creature, upon this account; "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," Jer. xvii. 5. But, alas! how many do place their trust in ignobler creatures than man is, in things beneath man! So much the meaner and baser is the temper of their spirits herein, to place a reliance upon that which is meaner than themselves. To neglect and forsake, to avert and turn off, from God; and then sink beneath themselves, creep to an inferior creature; this calls for the blast of heaven upon such a one that hath "forsaken God, the Fountain of living waters, to dig to himself broken cisterns, that can hold no water." For which the prophet (Jer. ii. 12, 13.) doth call heaven and earth to behold, with astonishment, as witnesses of such folly and wickedness as this; especially as being found in a people pretending to God. "My people, they that call themselves my people, have committed these two evils; to forsake me the Fountain of living waters, and dig unto themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water." When a man lets his heart unite, by trust, in that which hath nothing in it, forsaking the All for that which is of itself nothing, and which in itself cannot be a moment, what folly and wickedness is this!

This is the snare that carnal, worldly-minded men run themsevles into, and do not consider it as a deadly one: it is a snare of death; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they trust not in uncertain riches, (the lubricous things, the uncertain things of riches, as the words admit to be read, 1 Tim. vi. 17.) but in the living God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy." That trust which is not reposed on the living God, it is not only the greatest folly, but the highest iniquity; folly lies in it, that they place Deity upon a nullity, a mere nullity. That which thou makest the final object of thy trust, is thy god; and then, likewise, that trust is idolatry. God will be jealous in this case, when his rival is set up in his place; when a creature is made his rival; and the little minute things in this creation are made to fill up his room, and to be to thee instead of God.

Naturally, every one affects to be happy, and when this is the natural tendency of a man's spirit, that it is now quiet, in some measure quiet, either in the possession of what he hath got, or in the probable hope of getting more; and of having within one's compass that which one doth desire and covet, and reckon most suitable; here is my felicity, and I am so far quiet, because I think here I have enough. As he is brought in, in the parable of the wicked fool, saying, "Soul, take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up for many years." That which he had in his barns, that was his god; and now he thought his soul should rest, as thinking to have enough no where but there. Alas! thou fool, thy soul will be gone from thee this night; and then what will become of thee, and all these? What folly it is to set a man's heart upon such things; as the heart is set by trusting upon any thing. Trust fixeth it, as in its own place, as is spoken concerning trust in God; "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Trust is that which fixeth a man's heart. But thou dost fix thy heart like a fool, who fixeth it upon any thing unfixed itself; for then what becomes of thee and thy trust, when that is gone? So do they who trust in uncertain riches; "for riches make themselves wings and fly away, as an eagle to heaven."—A strangely emphatical expression! It may be the soul would say to itself, "Shall my wealth and my riches be gone? why, I intend they shall have no wings." Alas! they make themselves wings; they will not be beholden to you for wings; they will be gone of themselves, though you would never so fain they would stay. And there is an expression that is likewise strangely emphatical, and which is very proper to our present purpose, of setting the heart upon that which is not. All created being is so poor a dependant being, that it is next to nothing, and is rather fit to be called a mere nullity, a mere nothing; and that so despicable a thing should be put into the place of God; should supply the room of Deity; O! what an indignity is this to the Majesty of heaven; and how severely to be reproved! Because there is nothing else stable besides God; when the soul is once off from him, it offers to fix, but cannot be fixed, because its object is not fixed. Therefore, heathen light hath seen this, and a most significant expression was it of a heathen, "That a soul off from God, is like a cylinder upon a plain, that moves necessarily and perpetually, cannot be fixed, but continually rolls and moves this way and that; and cannot be otherwise, for it hath nothing to fix upon." And again,

This lets us see the absolute independency of the Divine Being; for what is there without himself for him to depend upon? These worlds are all that can be thought of *extra Deum*, without God; and they were all made by him. Can he depend upon that which he himself made? The worlds were created by the word of God; therefore, his being must be absolutely independent. And herein we should give our thought scope, it is pity we do not do it oftener, and more designedly, to consider the difference between that which is of itself, and which is not of itself. We might even lose ourselves and be swallowed up in the contemplation, to think of a Being, that, by its own peculiar

excellency, could never not be, to which it was impossible not to be; which was not beholden to any thing; for all things were beholden to it.

How is the great God magnified before our eyes, upon this account, in that 40th chap. of Isaiah, in several verses of it together, from the twelfth verse and onwards. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hands, and meted out the heavens with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" Who is he that hath done all this? The "who is he?" there, is not an expression of doubt; but of admiration and wonder. O! what a One is he! How glorious a One that hath done so! "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him, in the path of judgment? Who had he to commune with, besides what was himself, in going about this mighty work of creation? Who prompted him, who suggested it to him? "Come now, make a world, give being to a creation." No! all was *propria motu*. Who instructed this spirit of God, as to this great affair of the creation, or any thing else that he doth? "Who doth all things after the counsel of his own will! Behold the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are accounted to him less than nothing and vanity. To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"

So should we upon this account, greaten to ourselves the Divine Being, and heighten and raise our own thoughts and apprehensions concerning him; that when all things else, of this vast universe of beings, are so absolutely and purely dependant every moment upon him, he, in the mean time, depends upon nothing. All that he is, he is in, of, and by, and for, himself. He can have no dependance upon the creature, either for the support of his being, or for any other addition to his felicity; but is his own All. And how convictively doth the apostle reason with those philosophers at Athens, to this purpose, Acts xvii. 24, 25, "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor is he worshipped with men's hands as though he needed any thing, inasmuch as he hath given to all, life and breath and all things." And what can you add to this? What support can he have from you? what improvement of his felicity any way from you, or from any thing else, since all things are his own creatures? And further,

(5.) You may learn, hence, the divine all-sufficiency; and how vast an amplitude of being there is in him, when all this great creation sprang from him; and yet, nothing could be detracted from him by it neither. How vast an amplitude of being must that be, when all this great creation is gone out from him, sprang from him, and yet his being not diminished, nothing the less! O! consider this, and think how great and desirable a thing it is to have him for a portion; the All; he that comprehends in himself the all of the creature, and who formally possesseth his own All still: that is, is simply All. What can he want that hath him for his portion, who is All? All his own creation, it was virtually in him before, and is still virtually in him, depending still upon that power of his for its sustentation, that gave it being at first. And there is his own infinite All too. O! happy that soul that can say, "The Lord is my portion." How rich, how full, how satisfying a portion! And,

(6.) We may further learn hence, the absoluteness of God's dominion over all his creatures. Will you not allow him to do whatsoever he will in heaven and earth, who made both by his own word? Shall he not do what he will with his own? We are apt, most unreasonably and peevishly, to regret it when there is a disposal of creatures, or any little minute part of this creation of God, this way or that, any otherwise than we would. But how absurd it is to repine at God's disposition of his own! He gives more of this world to such a one, and less of it to me. What then? What he gives to me, and what he gives to the other, was it not all made by himself? And may he not dispose, as he pleaseth, with what he had made?

How doth he plead the matter with Job, to exalt his own dominion upon the ground of his creation? Job thought it hard that he who was so rich a man, so healthy a man, should be bereaved of all so suddenly, and of his health and comforts of his life besides: "Why," says God to him, "where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding. Did I consult thee when I made this, and that, and the other creature? And may I not dispose of the creatures I have made, my own way, and as I will?" And,

(7.) We may further learn, that if these worlds thus began, that is, were thus framed by the word of God; if they had such a beginning, even at his pleasure, then at his pleasure, too, we must reckon they will have an end. That which began to be at some time or other, it began to be what it is. Such and such things began to be at the pleasure of the great Creator; and at the pleasure of the great Creator they must cease to be what they are. And we ought not to think it strange, that there should be such an end determined for this world, as the Scripture informs us there is: that is, a time will come, at length, when, the purposes of the great Creator having been sufficiently served upon it, these visible heavens, which we behold, "shall be rolled up as a scroll; pass away with a great noise; and the elements melt with fervent heat; and the earth, and all things therein, be consumed and burnt up," as 2 Pet. iii. 10, and we are not to think it strange. And it is only upon this ground, that it hath been thought strange, that this should be the end of this world, because the beginning of it was not understood, as we may see, looking in the same chapter, at the 3d and 4th verses: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts; and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" "It is talked of that he will come, and then an end will be put to time, and all the successions of time. But all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation to this day. And therefore, we cannot imagine that there should be any such end." But (saith the apostle) "this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of the Lord the heavens were of old;" and because they are willingly ignorant of this, therefore, they are wilfully ignorant of that end which is determined concerning this world. They will not believe it, because they believe not its framing at first: "that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing in the water, and out of the water." Because they do not believe the beginning of things, therefore, they will not believe that which is told them expressly, too, concerning the end of them.

There are a great many things more, that we might learn hence, but they will more immediately belong to the consideration of our own creatureship, than of the world: they do not so immediately result from the consideration of God's having made the world, as the consideration, more particularly, of his having made us; and therefore, I shall not insist on them till I come more particularly to speak to the creation of man from another text

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LECTURE XV.*

2. I shall, therefore, now proceed to make application of that second general head of discourse; that the more principal and advantageous way of our coming to understand the creation, is by faith. And it is a very manifold use that may be made of this. As,

(1.) We may learn from it, the excellency of faith; how soul-enabling a thing it is. It hath a certain power, with very great light, to help a man's understanding, and to clear his intellectuals. By faith we understand. It hath, in great part, its seat in the understanding; there it is originally, though it is not finally there; thence it descends, too, into the heart. But it hath a great work in the minds of men. Faith doth supply minds with notions; so it is

* Preached December 16th, 1692.

if we would read the words literally to you. It doth furnish us with notions, which we should otherwise never have. It is true, if it be faith indeed, it will not let them always remain mere notions; it will inspirit them; it will make them vital, and powerful, and operative. But notions they must be first, and faith makes them so. By faith we have notions of things, that otherwise we never should have had. But this, I say, speaks faith to be a soul-enabling thing. It nobilitates the mind and spirit of a man; acquaints it with things from God, (for that is the business of faith,) unto which it would otherwise be a stranger.

This should raise and heighten our apprehension of faith, that despised thing; that little understood thing. That by which we are to understand; men do not understand.

Whatsoever it is that divine revelation doth, in order to the informing us of needful and useful things, that faith doth. And take we the compass of divine revelation, and consider all the great and glorious things that are contained and brought to light in it, and by it, and thence you are to collect the excellencies of faith. Because, without that, the divine revelation signifies nothing to us; no more that light doth to a blind man. The divine revelation and faith must both concur to the same effect, to wit, our understanding of things; as light and the eye do both concur to the same effect, our seeing of a thing. We cannot see by light without an eye; nor will an eye enable us to see without light, but both together. The divine revelation, that is light to us; faith is the thing by which we discern things in that light. And so, if we do apprehend an excellency in the divine revelation, which brings so many great and important things into view before us, we are proportionally to apprehend the excellency of faith too; without which all that divine revelation could signify nothing to us. And,

(2.) We may further learn, hence, how wonderfully kind and gracious God's condescension is to us, that he should make such a discovery, and offer it to our faith, of things, in reference to which we should be at so great a loss, and understand so very little of; as for instance, this creation of God: what we do owe to the bounty of heaven for this, that it should condescend, so distinctly, to tell us how things came at first to begin. Faith in that discovery which God makes to us of this matter, supplies the room and place of sight; and so it is the same thing in effect, as if he had let us see him making the world; for faith is the evidence, to us, of things we have not seen. We were not present, we were not by, when this mighty glorious work was done. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Where wast thou? saith God to Job, chap. xxxviii. 4. But now, God having vouchsafed to us such a revelation and discovery of this mighty work of his; if he also gives us faith by which we believe this discovery, it is as if he had set us by him while all this was doing; so, we have (as it were) the idea, the representation, the landscape of the rising creation; as if God should before that time have created one of us, and have taken us, and set us up, spectators of his whole work.

Whereas, yet, there was nothing but horrid darkness spread every where, then for God to have taken one of us, made us stand up out of nothing, and said to such a one —"Come, cast about thine eye, there is nothing but vacuity, emptiness, and darkness every where; come see me make light out of this darkness." He that calls things where they were not, and makes them be, or as if they were, saying, "Light, where art thou; come out of that dark, profound abyss; and immediately it springs forth; what an amazing light were that! Why, faith in God's discovery gives to you this light: by faith we come to be so intelligible, to have so much understanding about us, as to know how this world did rise out of nothing, eternal nothing, into that state in which now it is. And what vouchsafement is this to such as we, to do, in effect, the same thing, as if he had set us by him at making of the world. "Come, see me collect a mass of grosser matter; see me (as it were) spin out of it that fine texture of the vast and spacious firmament, those heavens that do encircle this little habitable world in which we dwell; see me adorn it with sun, moon, and stars; see arising on this earth, plants, and trees and woods, and springs, and rivers; all lately nothing, and now begin to be; see me replenishing this world with living creatures, in their several varieties and kinds." O! what condescension is this, that God should vouchsafe to tell us all this over again, and give us the representation so distinctly, of what, in so many successive days, he did and wrought in this kind. But, again,

(3.) We may further learn, hence, how inexcusable it is, that they who pretend to faith in this matter, should use it so little. If we falsely pretend, it is a most unjust usurpation of a name, to call ourselves believers; and that, of such things, when we are not. But if we pretend truly and justly to the faith of these things, then we are most inexcusable to use that faith no more hereabouts; to live so long, in such a world as this, and so seldom to consider how it began. A strange and inexcusable stupidity. That this world should be replenished with intelligent creatures, reasonable creatures; and that it should come into the minds of so few, and into any minds so seldom, to consider, How did all things begin? Sure we are there, where multitudes of things are existing, that must have had a beginning, that are not self-existent, or unto which existence is not essential, so, as that they could but be and exist. It is amazing to think that intelligent creatures should not more frequently consider with themselves, how things first began to be, beholding such a world as this, which they are sure was not always, but had a beginning; and not consider how it began. That men can behold such varieties of creatures, and use such varieties, and enjoy such varieties, and never consider whence they are, whence came they, how came there to be such things in the world, and how came there to be such a world? It is most inexcusable and strange stupidity, and dotishness of mind, in any reasonable creature; but most of all in them that do pretend to believe and know by faith, that the worlds were created by the word of God. And,

(4.) We may, again, learn hence, that what is commonly called faith, about this matter, is really and indeed not faith; that is, the apprehension of such a thing as this, is without effect, and that impresseth nothing upon the soul. It hath been very justly and fitly told you, that we have the notions of things by faith, many things which we should otherwise have no notion of. But though faith first begets such notions, yet it will not let them continue mere notions long, if it be faith; that is a mighty, lively, operative principle, powerfully working in the soul, to form that suitably to the thing believed. But while there is so little of suitable impression upon the souls of men, in reference to this thing, what they call faith about it, is not faith, but must be something else.

For the most part, it is not any thing else but a negative faith, which men are wont to call faith in this and many other such cases. It is, I say, but a mere negative faith upon which they place that great name; that is, a not believing the contrary, not having formed explicit belief of the contrary, that they call faith. They have not yet (it may be) laid down in their minds any formed conclusions to this purpose, that the worlds were not made by the word of God; and their not disbelieving it, they call believing it: whereas, faith is a most positive thing, a thing of great reality, and a thing of great efficacy and power, wherever it is. And, therefore, for such as never yet found their souls impressed by their apprehensions of the world's creation, I would admonish them no more to call that apprehension of theirs by the name of faith, but call it something else,—call it by its true name,—call it a floating uncontradicted opinion; and that is the best they can make of it, while it is an apprehension that hath no power: and while it doth not represent God in his excellent glory, as the great Creator and Lord of all, so as to form the soul to adoration and subjection to him thereupon. Never say till then, that you do believe, or that you have faith concerning the creation of the worlds. Alas! how many that have it often in their mouths—"I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth"—yet do but usurp the words, "I believe," and their heart, and their practice, contradict their tongue, and tell them they believe it not. Believe it! yea, as much as a known romance, while they live in affront of the Creator, and take upon them as if they were lords of the creation; and as if they had made the worlds and not He.

These things we may, by way of just inference, collect from hence; that it is a thing to be understood by faith, that the worlds were made by the word of God. But we shall thence proceed to some further *Use*; that is, to counsel and exhort those that have faith in this matter, to use it more; to have their faith more in exercise upon this great and noble subject, the creation of the worlds by the word of God. And it is to many great purposes, that faith upon this important subject may be employed and used. As,

1. To engage us in the more frequent and serious meditations on the beginning of things. To engage us, I say, in the more frequent, more serious, more affectionate, and more fruitful meditation of this matter. If we believe it *indeed*, let us think of it often. Our faith is an apprehension that it is true: and if it be once owned to be true, it cannot but be deemed to be a very important truth; a very considerable truth; a truth that requires, and challenges, great attention of mind, and application of heart and soul to it. Think and judge it an unreasonable thing, to live from day to day, in this world, and never consider whence it came, and how it began. And let your faith be set on work in frequent and most affectionate meditations of the beginning of the worlds.

2. Let your faith, hereupon, form your souls into adoration of the great Creator. Go up and down this world with adoring souls; let every thing you behold, from time to time, put you in mind of him, and make you bow your head, and worship. Admire that fulness of his, that fills all in all; and those variable displays of his wisdom, and power, and goodness, which are conspicuous every where, more or less, in all sorts of creatures. We are but nominal believers and Christians, if there be not many, if there be not much of this about us; and if we are not aiming and endeavouring that there may be more and more.

3. Let our faith instruct us unto the grateful and reverential use of the creatures of God, as remembering they are made things; and that we have the use of them by divine vouchsafement and allowance. There ought to be a *mixture*, a temperature of reverence and gratitude in the habitual frames of our spirits hereupon: and if we have a real and true faith in us about this matter, it will make it to be so; it will impress our spirits; it will fill us (as it ought to do) with a wondering gratitude, that such creatures as we should be so accommodated by such a world as this, so suitably ordered for us. If we use faith in this matter, it will make us sit down and wonder; look upon it as it is, an admirable thing, that the great God should have raised up such a creation, such a world as this is, out of nothing, by the word of his power. That it being designed, "I, in time, coming to have a place and being in it, should want nothing while I am there; such and such creatures, made out of nothing to supply me, to furnish me. What is it that I eat? What is it that I drink? What is it that I wear? Are they not all the creatures of God? What is it that refreshes me? What is it that delights me? Are they not God's creatures?" How full of reverential gratitude should our hearts continually be, on this account! To think such and such parts of the creation were made on purpose that I might not be in distress, that I might not feel necessity; and to think how this world generally accommodates its inhabitants; and to wonder with all, that their apostacy was foreseen! O! how should it replenish our souls with wondering gratitude, to think that there should be such a provision made with design, and upon foresight, for the entertainment of rebels and apostates! This whole world replenished and filled with the divine goodness, all sorts of creatures made for the unthankful and the evil. A design laid through so many successions of ages, "My goodness shall diffuse itself, and flow in such and such a part of my creation, (as this world is but a little, a very little part of it,) for the supply and support of those that will never give me thanks, (though they have natures capable of doing so,) even for the unthankful and for the evil."

4. Our faith, upon this subject, should instruct and enable us to contend with difficulties in reference to whatsoever God hath encouraged us to expect, or told us he means to do. What can pose that faith which believes the creation of the world? He that could make such worlds as these are, out of nothing, by his word; what cannot he do? what is there to be expected greater than this, that should be the matter of any present solicitude, thoughtfulness, concern, and care? If very perplexing thoughts of heart do arise about the ill state of things in this world, he that made heaven and earth, and all the worlds, by his word, cannot he make new heavens and a new earth when he will, and when the time and season of it comes? How frequently may we observe it to be, in Scripture, for the people of God, to animate and raise their own hearts unto the belief and expectation of great things from God, upon this ground, that he hath made heaven and earth, that he is the Creator of all things. "Our God hath made the heavens." When those vain creatures that dislike the divine government, and oppose themselves to it, taking counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed, when, I say, they have nothing to trust to, in the designs of this kind they are forming and driving continually; nothing but stocks and stones, the work of men's hands; "Our God hath made the heavens;" (so you have it expressed, Psalm cxv. 3, 4.) made the worlds; given being to all these worlds: and what cannot he do, when his time and season for it are come? And things will come to their full issue in the fittest time. Our God it is, who hath power enough to do the things we expect, and wisdom enough to order the times and seasons for them. Again,

5. Our faith ought to have exercise with us, upon this subject, in order to the keeping of our minds quiet and composed, amidst the various expressions and instances that we behold of the divine dominion and sovereignty, doing what he will in the disposal of affairs in this world. It may be, some we find him exalting, and it pleaseth us; we find him depressing, and it displeaseth us; we have a little share and portion in this world, and we regret it; others have a great and large portion of it, and that we envy. But we should consider whose this world is, who made it. May not he dispose of what he hath made as he pleaseth? This (as we noted to you before) is a just inference from the very thing itself, abstractly considered, that is, to form our spirits agreeably, and to make us content, and well pleased, that God does dispose of what he hath made as seemeth good to him.

6. We should further learn, hence, to behold, with great complacency, what appearances there are of divine glory in this world, which he hath made by his word. And to behold, with just regret, the dishonour that he meets with in it; or that these appearances of his are so little taken notice of; and that such glory shines unregarded as to the most. These are but dutiful dispositions and affections towards the Creator and Maker of these worlds; and faith should furnish our souls with such dutiful affections; otherwise it is a fruitless faith, a lifeless faith, if it doth not do this. Do I believe that God made these worlds by his word? how can it then but please me to behold his glory shining in such and such aspects and appearances of God? and how can it but fill my soul with such dutiful wishes? "O! may thy glory, more and more, be exalted above the heavens, and shine through all the earth." And how can it but fill our souls with resentments, that there should be such glory shining, and not regarded? The great Maker and Lord of this world, excluded out of his own creation, as if the All in all did signify nothing! men taking upon them, every where, as if they were absolute, as if they had been self-created, and using the creatures of God at their own pleasure, and in affront to him that made them. If faith would do the part in our souls which belongs to it, it could not but fill them with regret, and with a dutiful concern, that the great Lord and Maker of this world should be so little acknowledged, and taken notice of in it. Again,

7. The faith of the creation of the worlds, should engage our hearts in an earnest desire and endeavour to have a sure and clear interest in Him who created and made all. What doth this world signify to me, to behold it, to be in it, to be of it, a part of it, but to have nothing to do with him that made it? The faith of this would make a soul restless, till it can say, "The Lord of heaven and earth is my Lord." Were these worlds created by the word of God? then he shall be my God. He that could make such worlds as these, by his word, is it not a covetable

thing to have an interest in him? Is it not desirable? Can I satisfy myself till I have it? especially, when I find it is matter of hope, a thing not to be despaired of; when there are such notifications of his pleasure (that he is inviting and teaching men to take him, and choose him) published and proclaimed in his Gospel to the world, declaring now the terms by which he offers himself to be our God, and invites us to take and accept him for ours? The serious belief of this thing, that these worlds were made by the word of God, would certainly put us upon a most industrious inquiry, "How shall I do to know him, and to be acquainted with him, and to be interested in him, by whose word these worlds were made? And, I cannot satisfy myself not to know him that made them, and not to have him for mine, since I find there is a possibility of the thing; that it is a thing not to be despaired of, and it is no unjust or presumptuous aspiring, for me to seek an interest in him." My faith of the thing ought to make my soul restless in this case.

And if one consider, cast one's eye round about, and behold this world in the extent of it, (as far as our dim and short-sighted eyes can go,) and behold the great variety of creatures in it, methinks the thought should presently arise, "Amongst all these things, there is nothing suitable to me, to my spirit; nothing in which I can be satisfied, and in which I could take rest, unless I could find out him that made these worlds by the power of his own word;" till then, methinks, one should always look very wisely about one, and behold the amplitude of this world; and then, presently to think, likewise, "Sure it is a sad, melancholy thing, to be in this world as without God in the world; what an empty cipher is it, if God be out of my sight, if I cannot find out the Maker of all, so as to know him, and have him as mine." And then,

8. If one can do so, how should our faith fill our souls with high gloriations in that God? I have him, that made the worlds, for my God. "All people will walk every one in the name of their God." And we should say, And we will walk in the name of our God; and see where there is such another God to be found, that hath made these worlds, (how many soever they be, and how great soever they be,) and all by his word: I have him for my God. And again,

9. It should, by a little further recollection, make us apprehend, too, the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon whom the business lay of redeeming and saving lost creatures in this world; and must lie, of making a new world; of repairing a ruined and languishing creation. For you had to consider, that he had his part, he concurred, he was Creator even of this world. Look to the 1st chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; He is styled "the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person; he that upholds all things by the word of his power—the heir of all things, and by whom he made the worlds. "By him he made all things, visible and invisible," Col. i. 16. and John i. 1, 3. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. By him were all things made; and without him was not any thing made that was made." And I will not undertake to exclude that from the signification and meaning of the text, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God," the essential Word, the divine Logos. Though I would not lay a stress upon a thing that is not plainly and manifestly intended; yet, to take it in, is very suitable to the current of other texts of Scripture. The eternal Word had its hand and part in the creation; and it was by IT that these worlds were made. And thereupon, by a right of creation as natural, as well as by the acquired right of a Redeemer of a lost world, by the effusion of his blood, and the sacrifice of himself, he comes to have a governing power over all this world; being ascended and gone up far above all heavens, he hath all power given into his hands, both in heaven and in earth.

I would only improve the consideration hereof, to this purpose, to greaten your thoughts concerning your Redeemer. We are fain in very important cases, from time to time, to be beholden to our senses, even in the most important cases that can be thought. Our sense tells us something of the greatness and amplitude of the world; though it cannot tell us much, yet it tells us something; and by that, make your estimate (for we need such helps) how great a Redeemer we have; him that made these worlds. They were made by the word of God: he was the eternal Word; and as such, we are sure, having the eternal idea in him, according to which the worlds were to be made; by him, at length, they came to stand forth into being. Think this with yourself, "This is my Redeemer; he that had so mighty a hand in the formation of all these worlds; and in whose hand the government of them now lies. It is with him I am to trust my soul. It is to him that I am to subject and devote my soul. Have I not reason to do so? Have I not encouragement enough to trust him, that made this soul, and all these worlds, and to obey him who hath so great and universal a power over these worlds?"

10. Our faith in this matter should, more and more, release our spirits from mean and vile confinement to this one world only; for by faith we understand that there were more; therefore, our faith should release our spirits from a base confinement to one world, when it tells us of more. It tells us, there were worlds created by the word of God; therefore, it speaks an abject mind, a mean and base spirit, and so much the more if we have faith, (as we pretend to have,) to be confined in our thoughts, in our desires, in our designs, in our expectations and hopes, to this one world. Tell a believer, "Your all lies in this one world." "No, (he will say,) my faith hath got ken of more, notice of more." By faith I understand that there were worlds, framed by the word of God; therefore, it is a base thing to be tied to the present; "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world." A believing soul would look upon that with disdain, (there is such a generosity in faith,) and would say, "I scorn so base a confinement as that, to be limited to one world, when I know there were worlds created by the word of God." Though we are not told how many there were, yet we are sure they are more than one; and we have a very distinct account of one more, in which our principle concerns do lie, and are signified to be. And blessed be God for that, that we know so much, that there is one more, with which we have more to do than we have with this world, or can have, even where our principal interest lies, and where our Lord and our Head is. O! how should we bless God for this! that since there are more worlds, he hath told us so, and hath let us know it. To be limited, in our spirits, to this one world, this present world, is to run counter to the design of our Lord's dying; "He gave himself for our sins, to deliver us from this present evil world." He gave himself for our sins; what doth that signify, in conjunction with the latter words? but that they are our sins that chain us in our present dungeon. And by how much the more we can be released from these chains of our sins, so much the more shall we get out of this confinement, and get above this present evil world. O! if we have many things that we dislike in this world, let us bless God that we know of more worlds. And in the last place,

11. We may further learn, that our faith concerning the creation and being of this world, should very much facilitate our faith concerning the end of it. If we can believe, that these worlds were made by the word of God, we may easily believe what he hath told us concerning the unmaking of them. And particularly, the unmaking of this, the dissolution of it as to its present frame. We may argue from the one to the other, that since the one hath been, the other is not harder to be; if one be a thing to be believed, the other is as believable as that, when we are told it will be so.

It is very true, indeed, that believing is not formally arguing; but as faith doth rest upon the strongest argument in all the world, so it may supply matter of further arguing, though it be not in itself formal arguing, it rests upon the strongest argument that ever was; that is, that because there is a Being infinitely perfect, therefore, he cannot but be true, therefore, it is impossible for him to lie; therefore, it is inconsistent with his nature to impose upon his creatures: heaven and earth cannot have a surer foundation than this which my faith hath upon this matter, and upon this ground. And then, resting upon the strongest argument imaginable, it can easily supply matter of

further argument; that is, if my faith hath once believed this, that these worlds were made by the word of God, because God hath told us so, if also, he hath told us he will put an end to the present world, and how he will put an end to it, as he hath told us how it began; if I can believe the one, I can believe the other, too, with the same faith: and so am to live in the suitable expectation of such a time, when these visible heavens "shall be rolled up as a scroll, and pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all that is therein, be consumed and burnt up."

And, if I believe this, then how entertaining must the belief be! How pleasant the belief of the other world (as was said before) that is to come afterwards, that pure, and peaceful, and orderly, and blissful world! that lasting, permanent, and everlasting world! that when this world and all the lusts thereof are past away and gone, shall abide for ever, and all they that do the will of God: as that expression is 1 John ii. 17. "The world passeth away and all the lusts thereof." Love it not, nor the things of it. If you love it, the love of the Father is not in you: and it is passing away. God is not so unkind to you as to place your love upon vanishing things, upon shadows. This world, I tell you, and all the lusts thereof, are vanishing, passing away, will shortly be gone; the show will be over: but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever in that blissful world, which it is his will and pleasure shall abide for ever.

LECTURE XVI.*

Gen. i. 27.

So God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him.

WE have discoursed to you, more generally, concerning the creation. We now come (as we are more especially concerned) to consider the creation of man. It is true, that there is a nobler order of creatures, that were before him in dignity and excellency (at least) in the creation. But because that of their creation we have not so particular an account, and because our concernment lies less there, I shall immediately fall upon the consideration of what this text puts under our notice, to wit, our own creation, the creation of that creature called man.

The connexed particle here, that refers these words to what goes before, "So God created man," invites us to call back our eye a little. It is said in the 26th verse, "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." And then, the text tells us, "So God created man in his own image." This connexion shows us, that (as you have heard at large) God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. So he did particularly this great work according to forelaid counsels. "Let us do so; let us make man, and make him such a one, even like God." And so accordingly he did. This may be understood as an allusion to human methods; that is, that men, intending this or that work, they do use somewhat of self-excitation; in order thereunto, they do *accingere se*, they do apply themselves to the action which they intend, and, as it were, recollect their strength, that is now to be exerted and put forth. So is God introduced speaking —"Come now, let us go to work afresh, and make that creature man, even the resemblance of ourselves."

And it may also be understood to carry with it an intimation of that great mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. "Let us make man;" that conjunction of the pronoun of the plural number, with a verb singular, (as we have formerly noted to you,) being probably enough to give some intimation of the glorious subsistencies of the Deity; and who (as you have formerly had noted to you) are to be considered jointly under the notion of Creator.

* Preached December 22d, 1693.

And it speaks the perfect spontaneity of this work, or (if that may import any thing higher) the perfect intellective liberty wherewith it was done. "Let us make man;" there being no foreign inducement before the creation, there could be nothing *extra Deum*, nothing without God himself, but *proprio motu*, from the inward propension of his own mind, and that vast and boundless abyss of goodness, the fulness whereof was in him, now flowing forth, by free choice and consent, into a creation; and into the creation of such a creature as this. "Let us now make man; it is our mere pleasure to do so:" according to that in Rev. iv. 11. "For his pleasure all things are and were created." He only pleased himself, and took a delight in such an effusion of his own glorious power and goodness, breaking forth into such a creation.

In the words themselves, we have two things distinctly to be considered,—the work itself, of God's making man —"God made man;" and—the *norma* or the pattern according to which he made him—"he made him after his own image," made him the designed representation of himself: we shall consider these severally.

I. Consider the work itself, or the making of man—"God made man." And therein, we are yet more distinctly to consider—the product—man; and—the productive act—God made him.

1. For the former of these, the creature now made, and signified by that name of "man," that we are to consider and contemplate awhile; that is, that we are to turn our eyes inward, and contemplate ourselves, and consider what sort of creatures we are. We hear it often, that man is a microcosm, this whole world in little, an epitome of the universe; the two great classes of being meeting in him; *viz.* mind and matter, the invisible world, and the visible touching one another, and having (as it were) a *nexus* with one another in his nature. He hath a mind belonging to the invisible world, and a matter belonging to the visible, in his composition and frame. And so is set a middle creature between the angels and brutes, having the intelligent nature with the one, and the sensitive and inferior nature with the other.

We need to be put in mind of what is so obvious to us; for of all things in the world that we are so prone to overlook and forget, we are most of all apt to forget ourselves: though it were a precept of so high and great importance, and so obvious to a reasonable mind, that it did proceed from the mouth of a pagan, *Nosce teipsum, first know thyself*, yet it was reckoned too great and important a thing, to be primarily attributed to such a one. And therefore, it was said of it, *e cœlo descendit;* surely *it came down from heaven:* no mortal could assume to himself the honour to be the author of so great a saying as this. But though it be a matter of so great an importance, and the obligation thereunto, men perpetually do lie under; and though it be so obvious to a reasonable mind, yet, generally, look upon all the world, and you may say, "Men are the least part or study to themselves, they least of all consider themselves, to know their own natures, and what sort of creatures they are."

But that we may a little more distinctly consider this subject, plain it is, that man is a two-fold creature; he hath a double nature in him; he is a man and a man: or there belongs to his constitution and frame, an inner and an outward man: as the apostle elegantly enough distinguishes them, in 2 Cor. iv. 16. "An outward man," that is, a perishable and perishing thing; and "an inward man," which, while that outward man is perishing, is yet capable of being "renewed day by day," as he there speaks.

Indeed, while we turn our eyes upon ourselves, we are least of all apt to consider what is most considerable in our own frame. A people related to God of old, and even the strictest sort, or sect of them, (the Pharisees themselves,) our Saviour justly upbraids them with this stupidity, this piece of inconsideration: he speaks to them as a company of besotted fools: "Ye fools, hath not he that made the outward, made the inward too," in that Luke xi. 40. "He that made that which is without, did not he make that which is within also?" But both of these parts of man, or each of this two-fold man, we are distinctly and severally to consider, for both have that in them which claim and

challenge the deepest intention of our thoughts. There is the outward man which the Scripture speaks of, but under the notion of a tabernacle, the outward case or frame of man, (as I may so speak,) a thing whereof he is capable of being divested, and which may be laid aside. "I must shortly put off this tabernacle," saith the apostle, 2 Pet. i. 14. He speaks of a going forth, an exodus, as out of his house, out of his dwelling—"the earthly house of this tabernacle." So it is called 2 Cor. v. 1. "For we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" therefore called a tabernacle, because it is designed but for a temporary and very short abode and residence that we are to have in it; in comparison whereof, the future residence of holy and good souls, is spoken of under the name of a "mansion," in John xiv. and in Luke xvi. "everlasting habitations;" these are but very temporary ones. But though they are so, yet their present frame and structure doth challenge a very serious, and reverent, and adoring contemplation; whether we look upon the grosser or more bulky part of this structure or frame, or whether we consider that which is more latent, less obvious unto common notice. If we consider the grosser part of this structure, or tabernacle, either in the whole of it, or by parts, how admirable a thing is the composition of a man, even of the outward man, this exterior part of man! Such, as claims to have such things said of it, as we find, Job x. 10, 11. "Hast thou not poured me out like milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." All being prefaced with this, "Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about, yet thou dost destroy me;" he then seeming as if he were all of a sudden about to ruin, and throw back into dust again, his own excellent and so curious work: and of how great excellency is it, according to the account that these words give us, and according to that too which we have Psalm cxxxix. 13, 14. "Thou hast possessed my reins, and covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, when all lay yet in a rough creation; and in thy book were all my members written, (or in the idea of the Divine Mind,) which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." They were all fixedly formed in the mind of God, while as yet there was nothing brought forth into actual being, so that this was the effect of the wisdom of a God, this exterior frame of man, so contrived with so exquisite order, every thing belonging to it, in so apt subserviency to the several uses and purposes for which it was originally designed. Here is that which a pagan calls *ars dei, a divine art*, the art of God himself, in this structure or frame, a fabric composed and made up all of miracles; if we consider the elegancy and curiosity of the whole, and if we consider how the several parts were equally made to serve, both for use and comeliness: so that of all the wonders in the world, I know no greater wonder than this, that man himself, a creature so capable of consideration and thought, should ever have thought it possible, any of them, that there should be such a production as this without design; as if it were a casual, an unintended thing, that there should be so many severals in this composition and frame of man, but never intended for the uses and purposes for which they so manifestly and peculiarly serve. How stupid a creature is man become, that he is willing to admit even the greatest absurdity, rather than to admit God into his thoughts.

If we look into this frame, (though I can but touch upon things, and it is hard to know where to touch upon so great a multitude of things both observable and admirable at once,) if we should consider the aptness of the several parts that are in common use for the several offices and functions which they perform; if we consider what is external; if we consider what is internal; if we consider what is ornamental in our frame; how full of the highest and clearest judications of the greatest wisdom that can be conceived! There are, belonging to this frame of ours, the organs of the several senses, which do give so many advantages to such a creature as man is: every sense, or sort of sense, it hath its censorium inlaid in this frame; the things that are necessary unto feeling, and necessary unto touch, and necessary unto smell, and necessary unto hearing, and necessary unto sight. All these organs do belong to the outward man; though the sentient be somewhat diverse and distinct, from this outward and external frame: for it is not the eye itself that sees, but the soul in the eye; nor the ear itself that hears, but the same soul in the ear; and so as to all the rest of the senses too; which we all know, if that soul were dislodged, and retired, and gone, could no more see, or hear, or touch, or taste, than a stone: but the aptness of these several organs for their several uses and purposes, such a curious contrivance as that of the eye for the sight, and that of the ear for the hearing, it would require volumes to unfold and open these to you.

And then, if we consider that which is more latent, even in the outward man itself, not obvious to the notice of any of our senses, and that is the more spirituous part, in this frame of man, or the several sorts of spirits. I do not now speak of his purposes, and without which it were impossible that any of these operations could be performed, which do belong to the nature of man in this present state. There are the elementary spirits that are to be found in it, and that are common to it with the inanimate part of the world. As there is no sort of body conceivable, in which we may not also conceive somewhat or other of that which they call elementary spirit. And then, there is a higher sort of spirit, which serves for vegetation; and a higher than that, which serves for sensation; and all these, no doubt, some way or other distinguished, though we are not capable of assigning their differences, otherwise than from their effects; but all meeting in the frame of a living man: one sort of these spirits finer than another; another, again, finer than that; but undistinguishable by us by any other way, than only by such indications as the things effected do speak and hold forth to us. All these things we use continually; and we could do nothing without them; nor be what we are without them, in this present state. But seldom or rarely doth it occur to any thought, what they are, or that there are such things belonging to us, when without them there could be no motion: they are not things that are self-moving, (as no matter can,) yet they are things by which that which hath the power of motion in itself, doth perform such and such kinds of motions as are necessary in this frame of ours.

If we should consider the several things which are thus used; as all the muscles in the body of a man, reckoned to be about four hundred and thirty, without which, and without the spirits that do move them, the man were a mere trunk, a dead trunk; so many several sorts of muscles to turn that one member of ours, the eye, this way and that way, and the several agitations of spirits that must be the continual spring of all these motions. How quickly do we turn our eye this way, that way, upward, downward, and never consider what turns it about us, without which no such motion could be performed.

If we think of all this, what cause have we to break out often into those same raptures, that we find the Psalmist herein, in that last mentioned place: "How fearfully and wonderfully am I made: thy works are marvellous, and that my soul knoweth right well." And it is a mighty emphasis that these words carry in them, "and that my soul knoweth right well:" that is, it signifies this to have been with him a wonted study, that his mind used to be fixed on the contemplation of it—"my soul knows it right well;" these are with me beaten tracks, they are not uncouth or unusual thoughts; these are things that I think of, over and over again, from day to day." Indeed, when any one comes to consider the works of God, and particularly this work of composing this fabric of our outward man, they are wondrous; and we must consider them so. If we do but glance but one single thought upon this work of God, we cannot but say, "they are wondrous." But how few of us can say, "and this my soul knoweth right well:" that it is a thing to which my thoughts are used, and which is my continual work; I do, from day to day,

employ them and keep them in exercise upon such a thing and subject as this.

But time, and my own design of speaking as succinctly as is possible unto the several heads which I am to discourse of, allow me not further to insist on this same outward man.

We are to look yet further: and when we have taken some view of the habitation, to consider the inhabitant, that thing in man called mind and spirit; spirit in a higher and nobler sense than we used that application before. According to the exterior part of man, that you have heard of, he is called Adam, a composition of earth, of red earth, as that word signifies, or out of the dust of the ground; that earth pulverized, reduced to the finest particles, according as, more or less, so they were capable of being wrought into that curious contexture which their great Maker did design: hereupon man is said to be thus made. He hath the denomination there, first, from his outward, more visible, and observable part; this is the creature which appeared first to come under notice and view, upon this stage of this lower world. There was nothing perceivable of him, but this exterior frame that was called man: he hath that denomination *Quoad apparentiam*, in respect to what he did appear, and was obvious to common notice, or that might be in such creatures obvious to the notice of one another, the first notice. It could only, in that respect, be said, that God made man of the clay or dust of the ground; that is, what of man was capable of being made out of matter, was made out of such, or out of that matter.

But you have, afterwards, a further account of this creature, in the 2nd chap. of Genesis and at the 7th verse; that "God did breathe into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul." The outward man carried the name of man before; but now we are given to understand there was a nobler thing belonging to this frame and composition of man, which admits that he should be called "a living soul," from that breath of life, which it is said God breathed into him, that breath of life. It is as significant an expression as we could have in words, or that words could furnish us with, of vital spirit, a living spirit, that is the principal thing in man. And so, now, he hath the denomination, *Quoad rem*, as he had it *Quoad apparentiam* before. Before, he was denominated according to his appearance; so man was said to be made of the dust of the ground: now he hath his denomination according to what he is in reality; a living soul being breathed into him, as vital breath, from God himself, most immediately.

And here we are to stay our thoughts a little, and consider what this is. It is to be known, (as all essences are,) but by certain properties that do speak themselves in such and such peculiar effects, and so tell us what the cause must be from whence such effects do proceed. It is plain, that this same soul of man must be a substantial being; otherwise, it were never capable of such actions and effects as we manifestly find do belong to us, and are wrought by us. Now if we do consider them severally,

1. That which is fundamental of all other, is, that is manifestly appears to be a vital thing; the spirit of man is distinguished by vitality, by being essentially vital. It is very true indeed, that these bodies of ours, as long as the soul inhabits them, live too, have life in them: but I pray consider, what is so very obvious, the difference of that life, from what we must understand and conceive to be the life of our spirits. We know the body of man so lives, as that it doth not constantly live, it doth not always live; and so life doth not belong to it essentially; life is separable from it. The body of man, it can be killed; it is capable of losing its life; and so its life is but a derived and a borrowed thing from somewhat else. Spirit hath life radically in itself. For we must conceive the spirit of a man, this breath of life, (as the learned languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, have no word for spirit but that which signifies breath,) I say this spirit, or breath of life, is, in itself, vital, so as that unto it, to be, and to live, is all one. The body may be, and not live; (as I told you;) life is separable from it; but the spirit, the soul, while it is, it always lives, its being and its life are not capable of being parted from one another, as it is in the life of the body. And so it is from that life, that the life which is in the outward man is derived, and transmitted in all the several parts of that body, that do partake of life. And then,

2. Next to life, (which is fundamental, and indeed of larger extent, and not so distinguishing,) there is intellect; there is a power of understanding that belongs to the spirit of a man, by which his spirit is a thing capable of thought, or doth consist in a thinking power, a continual source or spring of thoughts: so that if we never so continually attend ourselves, we cannot find ourselves not thinking: there is a perpetual forge of thought from whence they fly, and spring up, as sparks from this or that fiery substance, and never cease to do so. And within that compass of intellect, lies not only power of forming thoughts but of connecting thoughts; of affirming one thing that we think of another thing that we think; and the power of deducing thoughts from other thoughts, of inferring some thoughts from former thoughts; that is, that because I think so and so, therefore, I consequently think so and so too; some thoughts having a dependance upon other foregoing thoughts: and a power of ranging thoughts, of methodizing thoughts, of putting thoughts into a frame and order, according to that relation which they mutually bear to one another.

And this shows this same thing called spirit or mind in man to be, not only a substance, but a substance quite of another kind from this outward man of ours, that is made up of matter, though there be things belonging to this frame never so fine, and did require never so high purity of matter; yet plain it is, that the spirit, that is in man, must be somewhat of a quite different nature; inasmuch as there is nothing of matter, whether gross or never so fine, that is capable of a thinking power: for you can no more discern a tendency of a power of thinking in a flame of fire, than you do in a piece of clay; a flame of fire is nothing more rational, nothing more capable of understanding, than a log or a stone; and therefore, whatsoever hath the power of thought belonging to it, must be a being of quite another nature and kind, from any thing of matter, be it never so fine, never so pure; there being no property at all belonging to matter, that hath any possibility of contributing to such a thing as thought—neither figure, nor the size, nor the motion, nor the connexion of parts one to another. It is altogether an unimaginable thing, that a piece of matter, be it never so small, should be more capable of thought for being of such a figure, or less capable of thought for being of such a one: that if it be square it can think; if it be round, then it cannot think; if it be of a less particle, then it can think; if it be a greater, then it cannot think: if such and such particles be separated one from another, then they cannot think; if they be put together, they can. No reasonable understanding can imagine any contribution in these things unto the act of thinking. And the motion of so many parts can contribute as little and no more than so. A heap of sand lying still, can be capable of no thought; and if it be agitated never so much, it will be as little capable: therefore, nothing is plainer than, that this property of the mind or spirit of man, that is, intellect or the power of thought, or thinking, doth speak this spirit, or mind of man, to be quite a diverse thing from all the matter that belongs to the outward man; even from every thing of the outward man; that the inward and the outward man must be quite diverse or different things. And then,

3. There is the power of will or choice belonging to this inward man, the mind and spirit within us, by which we are capable of determining concerning our own actions; of choosing or refusing, of resolving to do so and so; of resolving not to do so; or resolving to do to the contrary: a strange power, and of vast extend, that doth distinguish and belong to the spirit of man, and through which this soul and spirit of man come to have that double capacity, to wit, of duty and felicity. I were capable of neither of these, if it were not for that elective power, and consequently upon the intellective, by which I am capable of choosing my own actions, and the objects upon which they are to be employed. I speak now of the original capacity belonging to the spirit and mind of man, not considering, at present, the impairment or diminution thereof, by the apostacy: of which there may be occasion to speak in the proper place, and season, when it may come in our way.

But it is the same faculty or property of the mind or spirit of man, to wit, the power of election and choice, that makes him the subject both of duty and felicity. He were never capable of duty, if it were not for this; nor capable of felicity, otherwise than by this; as he is a creature obliged by the law of duty, and capable of being rewarded and remunerated by felicity. This is the thing inferred by the power and faculty in man, the power of volition, depending upon that understanding or cogitative power, which you have heard of before; though some take that term of cogitation to extend so far as to take this in too. But we are not considering of words now. And then,

4. There is the executive power, by which we reduce into act these purposes and intendments of ours; a strange sort of power; that is, being directly under the dominion and government of that former power, the power of choosing; that is, because we will do so and so; and so choose we to go to such a place; or we stay and move not: we move this and that member, or we restrain that motion. If we will we can move our whole frame with very great facility; or else if we will not, it is very difficult to move it. That I can by the notice, by the command of my will, make my whole bodily frame so easily move to this or that place, which without that empire or commanding act of my will, it would give so much difficulty and trouble to others to do. And I move it myself *nullo conatu, nullo negotio*, upon the matter, I make nothing of it, I do it with ease. This is a power that we continually use; but we very seldom reflect upon it, that we have such an ability belonging to our natures, and even to the very nature of our spirits, the soul within, by which to move to and fro these members of our body, as from time to time we do. And,

5. There is belonging, as very peculiar, (and some think it is most of all peculiar,) to the mind and spirit of man, the capacity of religion, of which the brute creature is altogether incapable: some think this more differencing of man than reason itself. It is a very dubitable and disputable matter, whether there be not that very thing in many creatures, that are reckoned brutes only, that we call reason. But concerning this, religion, the matter is out of all question and doubt, that it belongs, most peculiarly, to the mind and spirit of man; that is, the capacity of acknowledging a Divine Being, the Author of our being, and of reverencing and adoring that Being accordingly; that power by which I do *suspicere numen*, by which I consider a Being above me, the Author of my being, and of all beings, and of any disposition in me to pay a reverence and adoration to that sovereign and supreme Being thereupon. And,

6. Lastly, there is belonging to this spirit of man, (as peculiar and distinguishing too,) the power of governing the inferior faculties; the power of governing the sensitive appetites and passions; and even, in very great part, the acts of the exterior senses: I say, in very great part—there will be some involuntary actions; but how far the natural power of man did herein originally extend, we are not in this state of apostacy capable of knowing now. But undoubtedly, when man was himself in his innocent and instituted state, and where the inferior nature was held in direct subordination to the superior, as there were then no undue thoughts so neither were there any undue motions of an inferior nature itself, but what were certainly commandable and kept within due limits. And this empire did belong to the mind and spirit of man, to govern and conduct all the inferior appetitions and affections, and all the external actions, so as they should move or not move, be done or not be done, as to that governing wisdom seated on the throne, in the mind of man, did seem meet.

Of this there will be more occasion to speak when we come to the latter particular in the text; to wit, "that in the image of God made he man;" when we come to treat of the *norma* and pattern of this great divine work. But upon what hath been said, thus far, concerning the product, the thing produced, man; surely our thoughts cannot but reproach us that they are so seldom employed upon so important a subject, and that lies so very near us; for what can be so near us as ourselves. That we can have our eyes round about us, like the eyes of the fool in the end of the earth, and so seldom find time and room for any such thing as self contemplation.

LECTURE XVII.*

WHEREAS, in the former discourse, we told you, that it is impossible that the spirit of a man, this inward man, can have been made of matter, so neither can it be made of spirit, for spirit is not a partible thing. If any should suppose it to be made of created spirit, it is as good to suppose it made immediately out of nothing, as any former created spirit for the necessity will recur of referring this production at length, to that special kind, to wit, of making a thing out of nothing. But for its being made of the uncreated spirit, God himself, that would be to make the Divine Essence a divisible thing, a partible thing, as if there were parts capable of being severed from parts belonging to the same essence of God. And therefore, though, among some of your heathens, (your stoics particularly,) there have been those high hyperbolical expressions of men's being parts and members of the Godhead, *Dei partes sumus et membra*, as Seneca's expression is: and that celebrated stoic speaks softly enough indeed of the soul's being *divinæ particula auræ*, the soul should be a *particle of divine breath*; these are expressions allowable enough as high rhetorical strains, but not as expressions of rigid truth, by any means. If, therefore, the spirit of man were neither made of matter, nor of spirit, it must have been made out of nothing. And so in reference to this part of the product, the effect, the thing produced, man, that must needs be by most immediate creation in the strictest and most proper sense.

As for the question, "Whether that these souls were made at once, or whether made successively just then, when put into a state of union with these bodies?" is a thing altogether unfit for us to concern ourselves about; it being indeed such a thing as divine revelation hath given no determination to; and such a thing as no human investigation can ever be able to make a determination of, one way or other; we must be content to be ignorant where God hath drawn a veil over things, and not brought them into any kind of light that we can discern them by.

And then, for the completing of this production or productive act, we are to consider, (as comprehended in it,) the union that is brought about them between these two parts, the outward man and the inward man, without which there could not be one product considerable in the case; for when we speak of God's making man, (as this text doth,) the meaning cannot be barely, that he made a body for him out of the earth, and that he made a soul for him out of nothing; the production of these two parts will not amount to the making of a man, unless these two parts be united and brought together, so that of both to compass and make one thing; a man is not created till then, not made till then. And most plain it is, that this union, it was made, at first, by God himself immediately, without the co-operation of any second cause. But it is in the after-productions, brought about in a settled way and course of nature, in which, yet, we cannot say that man's being produced, doth consist in the making of his body, or the making of his soul; but in the union of the one with the other. There is not a man produced till then; till these two parts being produced, are brought together. But they are not brought together in union in the same way as they were at first; for at first it was by God's own immediate operation; but he hath now settled the course of nature wherein all following productions are brought about. But yet, still it is his work; otherwise, man which was God's creature at first, would cease to be God's creature, if he were not still the Maker. Now concerning this union we have this to say,

* Preached January 6th, 1694.

1. That it doth not confound the parts united, one with another; for the body is a body still, and not a spirit; and the spirit is a spirit still, and not a body. These parts do remain distinct in the union; there is no confusion of them in the case, nor identification; as if the nature of the one were lost and swallowed up in the nature of the other. But the body continues to have all the properties of a body; and the spirit continues to have all the properties of a spirit; the properties of the one are not communicated to the other. It is not the body that thinks, nor the spirit that grows, or the like; but these particular distinguishing actions proceed, that are proper to the one and the other, they remain unto each. But,

2. We have further to say, concerning this union, that, though under it the parts remain distinct, and are not confounded one with another, yet they are most intimately united; though it does not identify them, nor confound them, yet is this union a most close union, a most inward union, so as not to be ordinarily separable by any means that shall not discompose the recipient herein, that it shall be no longer naturally capable of being; so the soul cannot but stay there; and when it ceaseth to be capable of being the apt recipient of the soul, the soul can no longer stay: it is, therefore, a most intimate union; and a most marvellous one; and one of the greatest mysteries in all the creation of God; considering the vast difference that there is between these two natures, a piece of clay, and a mind; that these two should be so united together, that so long as the one remains naturally susceptible of the other, they can by no means be parted, they cannot be separated, while the crasis of the body remains entire. It is one of the greatest miracles in all the great creation of God; that is, that when this mind of mine, this spirit, is loose from all matter besides, I can move myself from this place, or that, as I will; I cannot yet, by any means, from this body of mine; to this piece of matter I am tied and fixed: and though this soul of mine be an elective and voluntary agent, and I do things electively, and at choice, I cannot at my own choice take myself out of this body of mine, to separate it from my soul; but whither ever I have a mind to go, it follows me, and goes with me, and cleaves with me; I cannot shake it off while the crasis lasts. This is a thing whereon the wisdom of the Creator hath infinitely outwitted us, and gone beyond us. We know not what hath tied this knot, this knot of man, made of these two parts, that are so little of kin, as dust and spirit are to one another, yet so to adhere to one another, as that they cannot be severed by any art, or any power, as long as the crasis or whole constitution lasts, so as this mind or spirit can go out and come in at pleasure. Let it be considered, for it is one of the deepest mysteries of Divine wisdom in all the creation of God. A great wonder it is in itself; and really, it is not a less wonder that it should be so little considered, that man, that hath such a thing as this belonging to his nature, a union of two such, so disagreeable parts, should so seldom reflect upon it, so seldom allow himself to contemplate and look into the mystery of his own composition.

But now, to go on to the *Use* of this former part—God made man; here are but a few words. But it is a vast improvement that they are capable of, if we would give our thoughts scope; and if it might please the Divine spirit to concur and fall in with his own word. Here lies before us the foundation, laid bare and open to view, of the whole law of nature; that which we call the law of nature herein, it hath its foundation even in this—God made man. It results but from the nature of God, and the nature of man compared together, or with one another; the nature of the Creator and the nature of the creature, this creature, such a creature. Inferior creatures are not governable by a law; it is an intelligent, voluntary subject that alone is capable of being so governed. And inasmuch as God is the most perfect intellectual Being, and our Creator, and we are intellectual beings too, and his creatures, hence results upon us the obligation of that law which is called "the law of nature;" and may justly be so called, or which otherwise may be called "the law of our creation." Take that in the general. But to be here a little more particular, there are these several things to be learned even from hence—that God made man. As,

1. Is God indeed our Maker? Then certainly there ought to be in us a most thirsty, longing desire to know him, as far as our minds are capable of knowing him. For what! can I be content to be ignorant who it is that made me? Indeed, there cannot be a higher and more notorious violation of the law of our nature, or creation, to be willingly ignorant of that God that made me, and gave me being. But how dismal a thing is it, that we should so generally need to be taught how to answer the very first question that we are wont to ask our children; "Who made you?" I hope you are wont to do it; God knows how it is; but I hope it is your wont and use to ask your children, "Who made you?" But pray let us consider, Do we not need to be taught ourselves, what we pretend to teach our children, "who made us?" When you would teach your children so much, do you mean that they should repeat the words and no more? Is it not your meaning, that you would have them understand who made them? Is it not your meaning that they should have some notion in their minds of him that made them? If we had so, and a true, right, correspondent notion, O! how mightily impressive would that very thought be upon our souls! how would it strike through all our powers, for ourselves to answer that question, "Who made us?" He that is infinitely beyond all thought, beyond all conception, declare his name, or his Son's name, if thou canst tell: as it is said unto Ithiel and Ucal, Prov. xxx. 4. Into what an amazement should it put us to consider, what answer we should put to this question, "Who made us?" Into how profound thinking should it cast our minds! Into how deep thoughts! Out of how vast and immense a fulness and plenitude of life, and being, and power, we did spring! That vast plenitude, that abyss of being, that answers the question, "Who made me?" He made me, that is the infinite fulness of all being, and of all life, and of all excellency, and of all perfection; and shall not I covet to know him? At the same time that I acknowledge him incomprehensible, I must look upon the knowledge of him as most desirable, the most desirable of all knowledge.

And therefore, it speaks a most horrid degeneracy (as there will be occasion more directly to take notice of hereafter) of this thinking part of man, his mind and spirit, that it can think of so many thousands of things, and covet to know them, affect to know them, but not affect to know the Author of its own being, of its own life, and of all those great powers and faculties that he hath furnished the reasonable, intelligent nature with; "They liked not to retain God in their knowledge," Rom. i. 28. They did not approve of it; that is the import of the word: a strange thing that this matter being proposed to God's own creature, and a creature capable of thought and understanding. Hast thou a mind to know God, to understand him that gave thee being? No, I do not approve of it. They approved not to retain God in their knowledge; there was a secret dislike and disaffection; "an alienation from the life of God," as it is expressed, Ephes. iv. 18. "And this they are willingly ignorant of," (saith the apostle Peter, 2 Epis. iii. 5.) "that the world was made at first by the word of God, the earth standing out of the water and in the water. Of this they were willingly ignorant." This matter, it lay hid from them, being very willing that it should: that is the import of the expression the Spirit of God makes use of there. It lies hid from them, being willing of it. What lies hid? That this world had a creation; of this they are willing to be ignorant; and so, consequently, that they had a creation. They desire not the knowledge of it: they say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thee," Job xxi. 14. Here is divine light and glory shining every where through this world; but we choose rather to dwell in the dark as to this thing. "The light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not;" receives it not, would exclude and shut out that light: a voluntary darkness; as if that darkness should entertain thoughts and communings with itself; as if there should be an agreement among the several clouds of that darkness: "Come, let us collect and gather together thick about such and such minds, to fence them against the beams of such light;" this mind is self-collecting, and gathering these clouds, drawing them in, inwrapping itself in them; "O! let us not know God,

though he made us: God made me, and yet I will not know him." O! unnatural thing; most monstrously unnatural.

Even so it is with men in their distresses, when nature itself would dictate to them, "O cry to him to give thee help who hath given thee being." Do but observe that, Job xxxv. 10. "They cry by reason of oppression of the mighty; but none saith, Where is God my Maker." An amazing thing, that men in their distress will many times cry to rocks and stones, but not say, "Where is God my Maker?" Cry to rocks and mountains, (as they will at last,) but lift up no cry to heaven, "Lord, I would fain know thee, manifest thyself to me in this my distress." No, men will perish under their burdens rather than do it; such is the disaffected temper of men's minds towards God. Indeed, for ease and relief they will cry, but not for God, or say, "I want to know God;" that is none of their sense. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?" Nothing more remote from the minds and hearts of men than this sense. And yet, it is not understood what they are incurring of guilt and misery, by this neglect of getting their minds furnished and enriched with the knowledge of him that made them. It is not considered what lies upon it. "It is eternal life to know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And if these two be necessary, (as we find in that John xvii. 3.) if both these, I say, be necessary, how fearful a case is it, if we cannot get men over the first, or to the first, which is more natural. But the knowledge of the true God, that lies within the compass of the sphere of nature, that belongs to natural religion. And a compliance with the divine pleasure in this, to wit, seeking to know him, belongs to the law of nature, by the first and primary obligation of that law upon us. At what a distance are their souls then from blessedness and eternal life, that when it is "eternal life to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent," we cannot get men to the first. No, they are content to be all their days ignorant of God; yea, though he be a Father to them.

O! strange prodigy of unnaturalness! So you would account it, if that were the temper of any child, that he did disaffect to converse with, or take any knowledge of, his own father. But this is the peculiar relation between God and men. He is a Father to them, a Father upon a natural account; as he hath been the immediate Creator of their spirits. And therefore, when Christ's line is run up to the highest, you find it run up to Adam—"Who was the Son of Adam;" and then by Adam it is run up to God—"Who was the Son of God," Luke iii. 38. and upon that account it is that we are said to be "his offspring," in that Acts xvii. 28. An expression that the apostle borrows from a celebrated poet of their own, a certain astronomical poet, who was highly in vogue with that people, or with the philosophers of that place; that university at that time. One of your own poets tells us "we are his offspring." Man is the creature of God; but with very great peculiarity. He hath many creatures besides. All the inferior universe are his creatures too; but among all man only is the son; that is, there is none below him to whom that title is ever given of being his son. "And shall we not be subject to the Father of Spirits and live?"

Besides this supernatural ground of this relation of Father and Son between God and the spirits of men, I say, besides the supernatural ground of it in regeneration, it hath its natural ground. And you will see more of it when we come to consider the Second Part—Man's being created after God's image: for if we speak of human productions, a man makes many things himself, yet what things he makes they are of a different nature from himself; but whatsoever he begets is of the same nature, of a like nature with his own. Human nature can make many things, make houses, make garments, but they have nothing of a similitude or agreement of nature with the maker. But it is this peculiar sort of production that gives foundation to the relation of father and son, even that which makes the product to be of the same nature and kind, or of an agreeable nature to the productive cause. If man be the son of God, then he must be an intelligent being, as He is. And this is the state of things between God and men; and yet they do not know it, and choose not to know it, are willingly ignorant of it. The matter is upon account plain, that their ignorance of God is voluntary; for that it is evident, it is not necessary: that is, they do not live ignorant of God because he cannot be known; for his glory shines every where. There is not the meanest creature but proclaims Deity to every one who will attend; there is not the most despicable pile of grass, or grain of sand, or any such thing, that will not make an argument to us of Deity, that cannot fail but be most cogent and unanswerable. For take but one single pile of grass, one single grain of sand, and here is a real something; that is plain. But is it a thing that came into being of itself? Is this pile of grass, or grain of sand, a self-subsisting thing? No, by no means; no reasonable thought can imagine that, that it can be a self-subsisting thing: for then it would have more perfection in it than all the world hath besides, that did not make itself, or come into being of itself: then it owes itself to a maker, and so we are unavoidably led to God. If you but so much as set yourselves to contemplate a grain of sand, or a pile of grass, follow the train of your own thoughts but a little way, and you are led to God, whether you will or no. This is either something or nothing; I find it to be a real something. Well, but what is it? a thing that subsisted of itself? No, by no means; for then it would have all the perfections, all the excellencies of the universe in it; and infinitely more: this grain of sand, and pile of grass, would have more excellency in it than all the world; for it is plain, that this world did not make itself: why then we must refer it to the maker: and so you are led to God, whether you will or no, by so mean a thing.

Therefore, I say, men's ignorance of God is not necessary, because they cannot know him; it must, therefore, be voluntary, because they are willingly ignorant of him. And the more plainly so, because, whereas they have a sufficient demonstration of the being of a God, even in the meanest creature, they have a more abundant demonstration in themselves, and from themselves. If a grain of sand, or pile of grass, will prove a creature and a Deity to me, how much more must I myself, who know I did not make myself. I know I came into being so many years ago; so that this work of giving an answer to this question, "Who made you?" doth not lie remote: I do not need to fly up into heaven, or go down into the depth of the earth, or to cross the seas, for an answer to it; but only look into myself. The word is nigh me, in my mind, and in my mouth; if I will allow that to speak my mind: I have in me these powers, these faculties, that nature, that most expressly represent God to me. I find myself a creature that can use thoughts; I find I have a power in me of laying designs, of forming projects, of foreseeing things, of comparing thought with thought, of inferring and deducing one thought from another. How manifestly doth all this lead me to God, the perfectly intellectual Being!

Therefore, it is the most amazing thing that our thoughts can reflect upon, that there should be such an indisposition and averseness in us to know him that made us. God made man; but man will not know God, though he be not a Creator, at large, only to him, but a Father; and man, in respect of his soul and spirit, his very offspring, he being the Father of spirits: upon the account whereof, pagans themselves have been wont to speak of God, as the paternal Mind, Father of all minds, and of all spirits, as some of them by the light that shone, even to them, could not avoid to see and say.

There is but one thing that leads to many more parts of the law of nature, and our condition which results in all the several parts of it, from the collation and putting together these two things—God and man: man being considered as the thing made, and God as his Maker; God made man. Sure, I say, in the first place, nothing can be more reasonable and suitable to this state of the case, than that man should have a mighty thirst to know God, to know him that made him. One would think it should be an uneasy state of the spirit of man, to be in any such ignorance of God as should proceed from neglect: to be ignorant of God by neglect, by not caring to know him, by not concerning oneself to have that knowledge, that

should be the uneasiest thing in all the world to the spirit; to be capable to have that said to him, "So many years thou hast lived in the world, lived in the flesh, a tabernacle that thy Creator and Maker hath framed for thee, and put thee into it, and all this while thou hast not cared to know him, nor concerned thyself to get any acquaintance with him." It very much becomes and concerns us to covet to know him. It is a very unnatural thing to be content to be ignorant of him that made us; but not to be willing to know him, that is much worse. But now,

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LECTURE XVIII.*

2. WE may hence collect, that our constant, grateful adoration of God, is a most reasonable duty incumbent upon all of us. Nothing is more deeply fundamental in the law of our creation, than the law of worship. "Let us come and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker." It is a joyful homage that is claimed unto him on this account, the most complacential adoration. "Let us come before him with thanksgiving; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." Indeed, nothing can be more reasonable hereupon, than those two great parts of natural worship, to wit, supplication and thanksgiving. Supplication; should not a people seek unto their God? Did he make us; did he give us being; from whom else are we to expect all the good we need? He that hath given us being, all the accessories of being are to be looked for only from him. And thanksgiving; these two parts of natural worship, are complicated in one another; in the institution of them, as they are in the reason of them, and root of them. "Let your requests and supplications be always made to him, with thanksgiving," as in divers texts of Scripture, which I might refer you to, and even upon that account, that he hath given us our very being itself, which is the fundamental unto all other good that we are any way capable of, that he hath given us being of such a kind. So God made man.

We should consider what is involved in the nature of man, and so bethink ourselves what we have to bless God for; that is, the primitive nature which God gave man at first, or wherewith he made him, every thing that he made was good, and so was that more excellently good. It is storied concerning Plato, a heathen, that dying, he gave God solemn thanks for three things: "That he made him a man, and not a brute; that he had made him a Grecian, and not a barbarian, (there being much more light among them in his time; than with the rest of the world, to wit, the light of philosophy and cultivated reason;) and the third was, because he had ordered it so that he should live in Socrates' days, who was reckoned so great a luminary in that part of the world among them, while yet they were overspread with paganism." O! how awfully should we adore God that he hath given us a being; that he hath given us rational, intelligent natures, capable of knowing and enjoying so great things! that he hath assigned us our station in such a part of the world, and where we have opportunity to know a greater One than Socrates was! that he hath ordered our creation in such circumstances as he hath done, in such a time and such a part of the world! Nothing is a more equal law that can be upon us, than that we should have an habitual, adoring gratitude possessing our souls upon such accounts.

And, upon the whole, adoration! how correspondent a thing is it to creation! adoration on our part, unto creation on his part. How convictive a saying was that celebrated one of Austin? "If I (saith he) were capable of making a reasonable creature to stand forth out of nothing, endowed with the power of reason and understanding, the first thing sure that I should expect from him would be, that he should fall down and worship me." In what an unnatural state, then, is this world upon this account, that being inhabited by so many reasonable creatures, it is inhabited by so few worshippers! Again,

* Preached January 13th, 1694.

3. Another practical deduction from hence, is, that we ought to live in a continual dependance on him that made us. So God made man. Hath he made us, and will not we depend upon him? trust in him? This is most essential homage due to our Maker, to place upon him, and exercise toward him, a continual, vital trust. This is a glory which he will not impart, but concerning which he is jealous. And, indeed, as to purely internal worship, this is the first and most radical of it, trust in God: and so very natural to an intelligent creature, that I remember Philo Judæus hath this expression concerning is; "That he is not fit to be called a man, that hath not in him hope towards God." He seems to mean it of what is most natural to man, that he is not to be reckoned a man that doth not trust in God, and doth not place a hope in him.

Natural dependance is reckoned, consequentively, essential to a creature; and it is so. A creature is naturally a depending thing; an explicit dependance, that doth as properly belong to an intelligent creature, as natural dependance doth to all other creatures. A creature, as such, taken at large, is a mere dependant upon him that made it. This whole creation is nothing else but a thing dependant upon God, upon divine power and upon divine pleasure; according to which it was determinable, whether it should be, or not be; and according to which it is continually determinable, whether it should continue to be another moment, yea or no. And so suitable as natural dependance is to a creature, as a creature, so suitable is intellectual dependance to a reasonable creature, as such; that is, that it should consider its dependant state, and often recount with itself, How came I to be what I am from moment to moment, when I cannot promise myself a moment's breath or being? This is so appropriate a glory to the Deity, that when trust is supremely placed any where else, there is a curse pronounced upon it; "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man;" (Jer. xvii. 5.) for this is to rob God of his peculiarity; to place a homage on the creature, that is most appropriate and peculiar to the Creator.

But it may be said, In our state of apostacy from God, what room or place is there left for trust in him?

To that I answer, very certain it is, men are in an apostacy from God. But are they, therefore, always to continue so? especially when he is so intent upon a design for their recovery and reducement; and he insists still upon the right that he hath in his own creature. Because his creature is revolted and apostatized, and run away from him, hath he, therefore, lost his right in it? If there be an obligation upon an apostate creature to return, (and if it were a wicked thing to apostatize at first, it must needs be an increase of the wickedness, to continue in that state of apostacy and not to return,) then, wherein stood our revolt, therein must stand our return. The revolt of a creature from God in his apostacy, lay in departing from him through "an evil heart of unbelief;" that it could not trust in him, did not trust in him; trusted the temper and destroyer of souls, against him, and in opposition to him. And to come out of a state of apostacy must be by trust, if the going into the state of apostacy was by distrust. But this must be in God's own prescribed and appointed way and method. When once it hath pleased him to signify the way in which he is pleased to admit of sinners' return unto him, wherein he hath made the constitution of a Redeemer known, there must be a return in and through him, and trust in God through him: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," John xiv. 1. Where this way of returning to God, so as to make him the supreme Object of our trust, is not known, there the state of a sinner is less capable of remedy. But where it is known, it admits of so much the greater and deeper guilt, if yet there be no thoughts of returning, and returning in this very act, by placing again our supreme and vital trust upon him who was the first great and commanding Object of it; that did most rightfully command it, and challenge it, for himself; Shall I have a creature that shall not trust in me? not make me its all in all? Therefore, to have our interest in God restored by Jesus Christ, that must be our great business, who live under the Gospel of Christ.

And then, we are to trust in God under that very notion of the Author of our being, knowing, that because we are

apostate creatures, therefore, that he will never for our sakes, but he will for Christ's sake, do the part of a kind, benign Creator to us. Our interest in him as Creator being now renewed; not lost and swallowed up, but renewed and restored: and therefore is the charge laid upon Christians, (1 Peter iv. 19.) to "commit themselves to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." His interest in us, as our Creator, was never lost; our interest in him, as such, was; but being now restored, upon this restitution we are continually to trust in him, and commit ourselves unto him under the same notion of Creator, still. To commit ourselves unto him as a faithful Creator, that is, he did put himself, at first, under obligation (implicitly at least) to his reasonable creatures: "Obey and thou shalt live," shalt be happy; he freely putting himself under this obligation. But the creature, upon his revolt, forfeited all his interest in him, and all right to that promised felicity, which, as an obedient creature, he might have expected; by Christ this right is restored; and so God is to be considered now, by such as through Christ have returned to him, not merely according to the benignity of a Creator, but according to his fidelity also: "commit yourselves to him as a faithful Creator," he having resumed the obligation upon himself to treat such kindly; and he doth do it, not merely from unobliged goodness, but obliged, which the notion of faithfulness doth imply. He will be to you a faithful Creator, if you commit yourselves to him accordingly as such. And again,

4. Another piece of practice that we may induce, and should learn, hence, is a constant and most profound humility. What! am I a creature? So God made man: there had never been any such a thing as man if God had not freely made him. Oh! then how deep an impression of humility should this fix upon our souls! What am I? A creature depending upon will and pleasure; it was lately in the power of another, whether I should be, or not be. A proud creature is a monster in the creation of God; the most horrid monster in the creation. What have I to be proud of, who am of myself nothing, and should never have been any thing, but by vouchsafement, by the good-will of another? It is to that only that I owe it that I am any thing.

If one creature have more, or do think he hath more, of real excellency than another, that, with the whole of his being, is all but a made thing. Thy whole being, whatsoever excellencies belong to it, either as common to that sort of creatures to which thou art annumerated, or more special and peculiar to itself; if it be any thing, (if it be not merely a concealed thing,) it is a made thing, as thou art: thou wast made, and it was made, and it was made to be thine; but all depending upon will and pleasure: therefore is pride a most monstrous thing in the creation of God. The continual sense of all creatures, of any intellectual sense, should be this, "We are all nothing but what it pleased our Creator we should be. We have nothing but by his pleasure; our being is a borrowed being: and the additions, and all the ornaments that have occurred to it, are all made things, all borrowed things." Should any one be proud of that which he hath borrowed? To wear ornaments that every one knows were borrowed, and to be proud of them, what a madness is that? Our very being is a borrowed thing, and all that belongs to it.

When God would humble a creature down into nothing, thereby to make it the capable receptacle of a Deity, a cohabiting Deity, that with such a one he might dwell, how doth he magnify himself the higher! "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool, Isa. lxvi. 1. All these things have I made, they are all the works of my own hands. Now, if I can find a creature sensible of this, to such a one will I look, that is of a poor and contrite spirit, that humbles himself into the dust before so mighty and glorious a Creator; with such a one will I dwell; he shall be my temple, the habitation of a Deity;" for the Deity will suffer no diminution in uniting with such a one; because that will still be looked upon as the All in all, while he still looks upon himself as nothing. And,

5. We further learn, hence, the great equity of the law of self-denial; it is a most deeply natural law; and when it is made fundamental in Christianity, that is but the revival and re-inforcement of a natural law: "Except a man deny himself he cannot be Christ's disciple." Why so, why cannot he be Christ's disciple? Pray consider what was Christ's business, when he was to collect to himself disciples. His business, as a Redeemer, was to recover apostates back again to God; and their discipleship to him, was only to put themselves under his conduct; that under the direction thereof, and through his mediation, they might return to God and be accepted. The very design for which a mediator was appointed, shows the necessity of his insisting upon this law as fundamental to the whole frame of Christianity. As if he had said, "My business as a Redeemer, as Mediator, is to recover and bring back apostate souls to their God again. Wherein were they apostates? In that they did set up themselves apart from God, and in opposition unto God. None can come to me and own me for their Head, and for their Lord, and Intercessor, and Mediator with God, but it must be under this notion; that is, that they look upon me as the only One by whom they are to be restored, and brought back into their primitive state, reduced to God, the great Author, and consequently the end of all things. And therefore did Christ, in dying, "redeem us to God by his blood," Rev. v. 9.

We are not to think, that we were, ourselves, the principal end of Christ's redemption: that would be an injurious and absurd imagination, to think that the creature was Christ's chief end; it were a horrid conception. God must be the chief end of all things; therefore, the design of Christ's dying was to redeem us to God; to restore back such and such creatures to God, that the end for which they were made, might be served upon them. Our interest in him is a secondary thing; but his interest and right in us was the primary thing. Therefore, it was impossible to be otherwise, but that Christ's designing the redemption and reduction of sinners to God back again, must lay this law as fundamental, at the bottom of all that religion he was to set up in the world; that is, self-denial. "You have lived in a separate state, apart from God. If you are weary of that life, and will come off from yourselves, then you are for me; then you come under my conduct; I will make your peace; I will buy it out for you, (and he hath bought it out,) and procure your acceptance with God, upon your return." But this can never be, if you have a mind to live separate still, to stand upon your own bottom, and make self your first and last. No, God must be your first and last; and he really is the first and the last. And therefore, "unless any one be willing to deny himself, he cannot be my disciple," saith Christ; he cannot be a Christian under any other notion than as one that is now willing that God, in all his authority, and greatness, and excellency, and glory, shall entirely fill up that room which, before, self had usurped. And therefore,

6. We further learn, hence, how reasonable and necessary a thing it is to man, as he is a creature, a created thing, to seek an interest in, and union with, God, as his highest and best good; for of himself he is nothing. That he is any thing (as hath been said) did depend upon divine pleasure. Such a one, if he do recollect and use thoughts, must needs state his case thus: "Not only am I incapable of doing any thing towards my own felicity, but I cannot preserve myself in being one moment. What good have I then, but what I must expect from him that made me? I have been severed from God, cut off from God, the great Author of my life and being; I have not, in this my separate state, my good in my own hand; I have not enough in me to make me a happy creature; a creature I am, but I still need to be a happy creature. And when my very being is not my own, what shall I be able to command for myself, or procure for myself, or raise up to myself, within me, that shall be able to be a felicity or satisfaction to me?" He that is nothing of himself, it is the most reasonable and necessary thing to such a one to seek a union with him who is All. I am in myself nothing; there ought, therefore, to be in me a propension towards him who is my All. My soul ought to incline towards him, to adhere to him, as its supreme and best good; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? who can I desire on earth in comparison of thee?" And,

7. A life of the most absolute devotedness to God, is the only righteous way of living; no man lives a righteous

life that doth not live a devoted life. And what are we to deny ourselves for, as neither being able to procure a felicitating good to ourselves, nor as being allowed to design a supply for ourselves by any interest of our own? And why are we to deny ourselves in these respects, but that what we take off from ourselves, may be immediately placed upon God who is our All? As we are to seek a union with God for our real, present support, and for our final satisfaction, so are we to devote and addict ourselves to him in order to this service. When we adhere to him, (according to what was expressed in the foregoing head,) that refers to our support and satisfaction; when we devote ourselves to him, that refers to his services; that we may serve and glorify him: for that we are to devote ourselves to him.

And that hath its reason in this too, that we are his creatures, he hath made us: and what did he make us for? Did he ever make a creature to be its own end? He hath made all things for himself: "Of him, and to him, and through him, are all things, that he alone might have the glory." Therefore is our own created being, (as it is such,) our very being itself, a perpetual, standing testimony against us as long as it lasts: if we live not devoted lives; if he who hath been the Author of our being, be not the end of it, this very being of mine is a testimony against me. For what sort of being is it? Not a self-sprung being, but a created being: So God made man. I am a made being; therefore is my being a testimony against me (the kind and nature of it being considered.) I am a continual testimony against myself, as I stand a created thing, depending upon will and pleasure, if I live not a devoted life, so as my own heart can bear me record, in the sight of God, that I do live to God. Being to ask myself the question, (and it is a shame to us if we do not often ask ourselves the question,) "What do I live for?" what is my business here in this world? If I cannot answer it with a sincere conscience, "Lord, thou that knowest all things, thou knowest that I principally design to live to thee, and that I reckon my life, and my being, a vain and a lost thing, otherwise than as it is sacred unto thee: I continually testify against myself; I should think it living in vain, to please myself, and to serve an interest of mine own, when I have not a moment to command, but depend upon the pleasure of another for every moment's sustentation in the being that I have." Who can answer it to himself, to live that sacrilegious and ungodly life? that is, not to live devoted to him by whom we live?

8. We may again learn, hence, what reason there is why we should love God more than ourselves: you cannot but know, this is a thing most strictly charged upon us, and wherein we are upon no terms to be dispensed with; namely, that we are to love him above all. We owe unspeakably more to him than we can do to ourselves. We do not owe to ourselves that we are any thing. "He made us, and not we ourselves." If there be any thing of real goodness in the being that we have, there is infinitely more in the Author of that being; and if goodness, as such, be the object of love, the greatest goodness must be the object of the greatest love, and the highest goodness, of the highest love. And therefore do not think that we are hardly imposed upon, when the law of our creation doth require and claim this from us, that we love God more than ourselves. And therefore, when our Lord Jesus Christ takes upon him the great business of our redemption, and reconciliation unto God, (which it was impossible for him ever to have effected, if he had not been God as well as man, upon the account of the Deity that was united in the same person with his humanity,) he claims so much for himself from us, that is, he doth tell us, that if any man do love father, or mother, or wife, or child, or his own life, more than him, he cannot be his disciple. We are to consider that there is Deity in his person, the fulness of the Godhead; and so that he is, as such, the supreme Object of our love, to wit, the Deity, which is in him common to the Father and Spirit, must be the supreme Object of our love. It is as if he should have said, "I come, in kindness, to redeem and save you as lost creatures: you are not to think, in doing so, I have laid aside my Deity; for then I could not have been a Redeemer and a Saviour to you: and therefore, having that Godhead united with my humanity, in my own person I require this of you, that is, that you love me more than your very being: and you cannot be my disciples upon any other terms." He was Creator, in conjunction with the Father, and the Spirit; for "by him were all things made, visible and invisible; and without him, nothing was made that was made." And therefore, we are not to think it a hard or an unreasonable imposition upon us, that we are to love God, and to love Christ, more than ourselves; more than this natural life or being of ours, so as that all must be a sacrifice to his pleasure, if he once say the word, or signify his will to that purpose.

And that is the way, having lost ourselves, to find ourselves again, by loving him above ourselves. "If any man loves his life," (that is supremely,) "he shall lose it; but if he will lose his life for my sake, he shall find it." We find life, and all, in God through Christ, when we are lovers so as to make him the supreme Object of our love, as in that John xii. 25. No man can really be a loser by so abandoning himself, as to place that love which he unjustly placed upon himself before, (that is, his supreme love,) now upon God, and upon Christ. No man can be a loser, but he finds himself again in this case. He had lost himself before; but now he is restored to himself and to his God both at once. Then,

9. We may further learn, hence, how reasonable a thing it is, that man should be under government. Is he a creature? then he ought to be a governed thing. The most reasonable thing in all the world it is, that he that hath given us being, should give us law. Hath he been the Author of being to us? and shall he not rule his own creature? shall that be allowed to have a will against his will? To have been raised up out of the dust, but the other day, out of nothing, and now to dispute whose will shall be superior, mine or his that made me, what an insolency is it! We may again learn,

10. How foolish a thing is self-designing, when men lay their designs apart from God; forming their projects, as the apostle James speaks, chap. iv. 15, 16. "I will go to such a city, and buy and sell and get gain. And I will reside there for such a time." This all proceeds from our forgetting that we are creatures, made things. God hath made us; so that our breath is in his hands. How great an absurdity is it, as well as an injury, that I should talk of forming projects, and laying designs, when I am but a made thing, and there is an arbitrary hand underneath me, which sustains me; but that may let me drop and sink, in the next moment, if it be withdrawn. We ought to say, "If God will, we will do so and so?" If your being depend upon his will, certainly your actions and affairs depend upon his will too. But for men to design so and so, without consulting God, or referring themselves to God, is to take upon them as if they were not creatures. And,

11. We may hence learn, further, (as that which is fundamental to all the rest,) how indispensable an obligation there lies upon us to preserve a continual, awful remembrance of God upon our minds and hearts, from time to time, all the day long. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." I pray, let us but use our own understanding in considering this. When it is said, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," (Eccles. xii. 1.) is the meaning of it, that we are only when we are young to remember him, and forget him all our days afterwards? No, the meaning is, that those days of our youth are not to be exempted, we are not at liberty to forget him even then, but that he claims an early and first interest in our time and thoughts, and in the truth and vigour of our spirits, and that we are to begin then, when we are young, as we are to continue all our days afterwards. And how is he to be remembered? Why under the very notion of Creator: that suggests to us the very reason why we are to remember him; because he is our Creator, and our breath is continually in his hands. What! do we think a man can subsist without God, any better when he is grown up, or when he is grown old, than he could when he was young? No, the reason upon which the obligation rests, is still the same upon us all our days; that, therefore, it is a most monstrous thing, to consider how men come to dispense with themselves in this fundamental duty, that virtually comprehends all the rest. All is lost and gone, if we

do not so much as remember God. How can we dispense with ourselves to rise up in the morning, without a serious thought of God, and run after our common affairs all the day long, and still forget him? And lie down at night (it may be) without any serious remembrances of him? and yet lie down with the apprehension that we are innocent in all this; we have passed over this day well if we have succeeded in our business, if there hath been no disaster that hath befallen us, all hath been well; though there hath been no serious thought of God, no minding of God at all; that is to live in a downright rebellion against God, through a whole day; and also from day to day, through a whole life's time hitherto; for it must be entire and universal rebellion, inasmuch as all duty towards him depends upon remembering him; we can do nothing besides if we do not do that. Therefore, is that given us as the character and diagnostic of wicked men, of men that are designed for hell, and allotted to hell for their final and eternal inheritance and residence. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God," Psalm ix. 17. And they, accordingly, are characterized as such, who more peculiarly belong to God, and as those whom he owns for his own and counts his jewels; "In the day that I make up my jewels, saith God, they shall be mine." Who? why "They that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name," Mal. iii. 16, 17. "And the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." This is the profession of his holy ones, Isa. xxvi. 8. And again, we may add,

12. Since God made man, you see how easy it is for him to prevent all the evil designs of ill men, if he see good; for they are all his creatures; and hath he made a creature that he cannot govern? If then we see wicked men, at any time, bring their wicked devices to pass, it is not because God cannot rule them; but because he hath deeper designs that they understand not, and we understand not. And therefore, their insolency, and good men's despondency, upon that account, are equally unreasonable. They triumph; and good men are dejected; their hearts sink, and they hang down their heads; and why? because wicked men prevail, and prosper in their way, many times, ages together; and, it may be, in many parts of the world. But,

(1.) Their confidence, on the one hand, is so unreasonable as to be even ridiculous. "He that sitteth in the heavens laughs, the Most High hath them in derision." "A company of bubbles of being, that I can let drop into nothing in a moment, if I please; and yet they please themselves in the hopes and imaginations of succeeding in such and such designs as they have laid." "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" at them. He knows how soon he can let such bubbles drop into nothing; and he sees that their day is coming. And,

(2.) Good men's despondency is, upon this account, equally unreasonable. "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding," Isa. xl. 28. Thou dost not know the counsels of God, what that all-comprehending mind and understanding of his doth design, in letting creatures awhile run such a course. But we are to be assured, he hath his own creatures in his own hand and power, both men and devils, and can govern them as he pleaseth. He hath a hook in their nostrils, that they themselves are unapprehensible of. He knows their coming in, and their going out, (as he said of that proud Assyrian,) and even all the rage which they have against him. But, I say, he hath a hook in their nostrils, and can turn them as he pleaseth, and when he will. We shall have done a great thing towards the whole business of our religion if we can but get this truth impressed upon, and deeply wrought into, our souls; *So God made man;* if we will but learn to look upon ourselves as made things, and look upon all men as made things, continually in the hands, and at the command, of their great Creator.

* Preached January 29th, 1694.

LECTURE XIX.*

Gen. i. 27.

So God created man in his own image.

WE have treated of the first thing, to wit, this creation itself. So God made, or created man. And now,

II. We come to speak of the *norma* or pattern of this work of his; or the estate wherein man was created; in his own image, which is mentioned with a reduplication; "in the image of God created he him;" and this we shall speak to briefly, by way of explication and application.

1. In the explication, our great business must be, to inquire, and show, wherein stood this image of God, wherein man was created. Theirs was a strange and absurd dream, (that of the anthropomorphites,) that is, they who did ascribe to God a corporeal shape, and supposed man to be made like to God in that respect. We know, indeed, that in tract of time, our Lord Jesus Christ did assume a human body; but that gives no pretence at all to this imagination; for therein he was made like unto us, man being the pre-existent pattern, and not we like to him, man being made long before. And to ascribe to Deity itself a corporeal shape, must needs speak very mean and base thoughts of God, founded in gross ignorance, and rising up into a mental blasphemy; and indeed, very vile thoughts even of ourselves, as if we were but to imitate God in somewhat corporeal.

Some of the more refined pagans have disclaimed, and declaimed against such gross thoughts of God, warning us to take heed of ascribing any thing corporeal to him; as one, inquiring how we are to conceive of God, according to the doctrine of Plato, (I mean Maximus Tyrius,) he tells us, "we must be very shy, and it ought to be most remote from us, to ascribe any thing at all corporeal to him, neither shape, nor colour, nor magnitude, nor any kind of figure whatsoever; but somewhat of that high excellency as neither to be seen with eyes, nor felt with hands, nor expressed by any words." In some such things we are to understand the excellency of the Divine Nature and Being to consist. And accordingly, the apostle, discoursing to those Athenian philosophers, (Acts xvii.) supposeth them very capable of understanding so much as this; he quotes one of their own poets for it, that "we are God's offspring." "And forasmuch," saith he, "as we are the offspring of God, we cannot conceive the Godhead to be like any corporeal thing of never so great excellency;" as silver or gold, of which some corporeal shape or resemblance may be made, or stands never so curiously graven by the art or device of man: we must understand our resemblance to him, as we are his offspring, to lie in some higher, more noble, and more excellent thing, of which there can be no figure; as, who can tell how to give the figure or image of a thought, or the mind or thinking power? This image, therefore, must principally lie in some mental thing, and is to be only mentally understood: that is, it must have its seat and subject in the soul and spirit of man itself: and so we must know this image of God in man, wherein he was made, to be two-fold; natural and moral.

(1.) Natural, standing in such things as wherein the very nature and essence of man's soul and spirit doth consist and lie. As,

[1.] In spirituality: the soul of man is a spirit, as God himself is a Spirit. He, the paternal Spirit, (as a heathen very aptly speaks,) the fatherly Mind; and agreeably to that, we are his offspring, he being the Father of spirits.

[2.] And in life; essential life. We have bodies that live a borrowed life. Our spirits are, themselves, living things in their own nature and essence; so that life is inseparable from them, as it is not inseparable from our bodies; for our bodies can die; but our souls cannot. If it be, it lives: being and life are the self-same thing. As the blessed God is so frequently spoken of in Scripture, "the living God," the original well-spring of life; so making a creature like himself, and in his own image, he makes him

to be such as to whom life should be essential, though it be dependent upon him, (as all being must be,) yet life being made so much of the essence of man's soul that it can never be severed from it, therein its life is like the divine life; that is, it is an immortal life. It is true, "he only hath immortality;" that is, he only hath an original, independent immortality. But the souls of men, and all created spirits, have a dependent immortality, together with their dependent being, and not separable from it. And,

[3.] In the power of understanding; therein doth the soul of man bear the image of God naturally, as it is an intelligent thing, a thing that hath a power to understand and know the impress of God is upon the spirit of man in this. "He that teacheth men knowledge, shall not he know?" Psalm xciv. 10. And he that declareth unto man his thoughts, (as having given him the thinking and the knowing power,) are we not to suppose, he should know his own work? And,

[4.] In liberty, or the power of willing this or that; of acting or suspending its own acts, and of acting this way or that, accordingly as it shall choose: a dominion it hath over its own act, a self-determining power, or self dominion; but subordinate to the divine dominion; for he never made a creature that he was not to govern. These are things that I now mention, but which being included in the nature and essence of man, when I gave you an account of this creature man, which God is said to have made.

I shall only add two things more generally concerning this natural image of God in man.

First, That it is permanent and lasts always, as long as man lasts, as it cannot but do, it being essential to him, or his very nature; for his very nature did resemble the divine, "the image and glory of God," as he is called, 1 Cor. xi. 7. It must, therefore, be permanent, and can never be severed from man; this is an image that could not be lost. Man could not lose this image; his soul must be a spirit still; a living thing still; and an understanding thing still; a spontaneous, free thing still, subject only to the divine government. And therefore, considering man, even in his estate of apostacy, we find this image of God still remaining, as the perpetual reason of that law of preserving the life of man in this body, as in the 9th Gen. 6. "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." If the reason of the law were lost, the law were lost, and would cease; but plain it is, the law was made with reference to man, already fallen: fallen man, apostate man, still bears, in that respect, the image of God; therefore, he will not have his life to be touched. He is a God-like creature, and he that strikes at the life of man, strikes at the image of God! A very awful thought, to consider that man, even as he is man, while he was in innocency, or in apostacy, is still the image of God, and therefore must be inviolable, not to be touched beyond his rules, who reserves to himself still the dominion over lives, as being the God of our lives, so as to kill or to make alive, either immediately, or mediately, by his own authority in men, but not otherwise. And,

Secondly, There is this to be said in general, too, concerning the natural image of God in man; as it is permanent, so it is fundamental unto the other image, and the contraries thereunto; that is, if man had not the natural image of God upon him, he were never capable of having a moral image, could never be a holy creature, nor unholy, if he were not naturally such a creature. And he could never be happy or miserable, if he were not such a creature: that is, if he had not a soul that were a spirit, and that were a living thing, and that were intelligent, and that were capable of acting voluntarily and by choice. And therefore, this image must still be presupposed unto the other.

(2.) Which other we now go on to speak of, that is, the moral image of God in man, founded on the former. And so man doth bear, and did originally bear, the image of God, in the moral sense, in these two respects—first, in purity—secondly, in felicity. He did at first resemble God as a holy and as a happy being. In reference to both these, the natural image of God was fundamental to the moral; this was the very foundation in him of all duty and of all felicity; and of the contraries thereunto, that is, of sins and of misery; as contraries must always have the same subject in which they take place, successively, or in a remiss degree.

[1.] This image of God in man, which we call *moral*, superadded to his natural image, stood in this, to wit, in the sanctity and holiness of this creature in his original state; the rectitude of his natural powers and faculties with reference to his rule and end. But this is to be understood with *caution*. We are to take heed of asserting either too much, or too little, concerning the holiness of man's original state. We must take heed of asserting too much concerning it, to wit, so much as would not consist with the possibility of his falling; or too little, to wit, what would not consist with the possibility of his standing. But, in general, this sanctity or holiness wherewith man was made, and wherein he did originally resemble God, it stood in these two things:

First, In innocency; that is, that he was made perfectly innocent, and it was impossible that it should not be so; for it could not consist with the holiness, and the other perfections of the Divine Being, to make him a sinner. He could not come out of the hand of God at first, an impure and unholy thing. Wherein stood the image of God, but in that he was originally holy, as God is holy? to wit, in some similitude to the holiness of God: he was created in this, as part of the image of him that created him, as that Col. iii. 10. and Ephes. iv. 24. do plainly imply: for the image of God restored and renewed must be the image that was lost. It could not be a specifically different thing: therefore, when the soul is renewed after this image, it is plain, that he was created in it; that is, was created an innocent and sinless creature: not barely in the negative sense; for so is a stone or a brute innocent. I say, not in that sense only; but as being free from all taint and impurity, when he was a capable subject of being both pure and impure; which a stone or other unintelligent creature was not. And then,

Secondly, This holiness, wherein man was created, as it did include innocency, freedom from any taint of sin; so it did include a possibility of continuing so; that is, that there was no depraved inclination in his nature, as it was made or created by God, to determine him unto sin; unto any sinful thought, or to any sinful act. It is true, he was not made impeccable, or with an impossibility of sinning, yet he was made with a possibility of not sinning; that is, with an intrinsical possibility thereof; for we must distinguish here, between possibility and futurity. It is true, that his fall was future; but his standing, for all that, was possible; we mean only by it, a simple possibility, not compounded with any consideration of God's foreknowledge. It is true, God did foreknow what would become of man; but that did not infer a necessity upon his nature; that could have no influence to make him fall; that is, that God foresaw, that being left to himself he would fall; but he saw at the same time, that though he would fall, yet that he had done that for him by which it was possible for him to have stood, if he had followed the law of his own nature. And therefore, though we call this image moral, in contradistinction to natural, yet we are not to think that it was in no sense natural: for it was con-natural. It was not natural, as that signifies essential; for then it could not have been lost; but as it signifies somewhat agreeable to the nature of man: and nothing could be more agreeable to his nature, than to have continued still an obedient creature to God, and consequently happy in him; so that it was not at all to be ascribed to man's nature that he fell; for that were to resolve the cause of his fall into the Author of his nature; and so, to cast all upon God at length; whereas, man's destruction is only of himself, he is the fountain of whatsoever is evil, and God the only fountain of all good.

But then, we are to consider the holiness wherewith man was created, more particularly. And so, it stood in the confirmation, or the conforming of the faculties of his soul unto the rule and order wherein God did at first set them; that is, as for the mind and understanding, it did agree with the divine mind; and for his will, it did agree with the divine will; and so, the faculties of the human soul, those two great leading faculties, the mind and the

will, did each of them bear the stamp and impress of God upon them. And therefore, whereas we find God spoken of under that two-fold notion in Scripture, and by one and the same penman of the Holy Scripture, the evangelist John, in his 1st epistle, that "God is light," and that "God is love;" the one in the 1st chap. verse 5, and the other in the 4th chap. the 8th and 16th verses. Such a creature was man in his mind, and in his will, conformed to the Divine mind and will.

i. "God is light," saith the apostle, "and with him is no darkness at all; and he that walks in darkness, and saith, he hath fellowship with God, lies;" there can be no fellowship between light and darkness. We are not to understand light there to mean merely speculative knowledge; but we are to understand it as signifying practical principles, lodged in the mind, and which are most connatural to holiness in the will and heart. They are the ideas contained in the one, which are exemplified in the other. So, "God is light," essential light itself; and so was the spirit of man, "the inspiration of the Almighty having given it understanding:" that is, that it was,

(i.) A knowing thing; not only had a power to know, but did actually know all that concerned him to know, or that it was his duty to know. And as such, this part of the divine image is referred to morality; for there are some things which it is our duty to know, and to be ignorant of them is a sin. But we are not to suppose man to be destitute of any knowledge, that he ought to have had, in the state of his primitive innocency; though it must be far from us to think that he had universal knowledge, that he knew all things; for that would still be proper to God as an incommunicable attribute of the Divine nature. And therefore, his knowledge must have been a growing thing in that state wherein he was made. But he did know all that did belong to him to know, for the state wherein he was. And so are we to conceive of that knowledge, as the moral additament to the faculty or power of knowing, which is natural. And then,

(ii.) Besides his actual knowledge we must understand, in his mind, a docility, or an aptitude to learn, or know more; and still more, according as the Creator should vouchsafe to reveal more to him, or as he should give him opportunity (as he had given him a natural ability) to reason himself from the knowledge of some things into the knowledge of more.

ii. For his will, that must have been the seat, too, of the holiness wherein the image of God stood, and wherein he did resemble God; and there is the seat of God's law impressed; for we must know, that man was made at first with the law of God written in his heart. Besides the positive precept which he transgressed, there was the whole frame of that whole law in him, which was to be the permanent rule of his practice and obedience; for the apostle speaking of man in his fallen state, (Rom. ii. 15.) tells us, "that even pagans themselves," (where there are the greatest ruins of the human nature to be seen,) "even they have the law written on their hearts." And if it be so with fallen man, what an entire impression must there have been of the divine law upon the mind of man yet in his integrity. A law written in his heart, of which some pagans speak, calling it the *non scripta, sed nata lex*, not a law written, (that is, in any external scripture,) but an engraven law, an innate law, that was impressed on man on his creation, or that he was made with.

And so, as this law which is, in itself, of universal and everlasting obligation, is all summed up in *love*, which is the fulfilling of the law; why, therein we must understand this creature to have at first resembled God; that is, as God is said to be "light," so he was in respect of his mind; and as God is said to be "love," so he was in respect of his will or heart: a creature made up of love, which sums up all duty; for "love is the fulfilling of the law." And therefore, when men are renewed and brought back to God, and his image restored in them, they are created after God in this respect, so as to be capable of dwelling in *love*, as in a proper element and region con-natural to them. This was the great principle that did conform men to both parts of the law; that part which was to respect God himself, and that part which was to respect men towards one another; for these were the two great natural and moral precepts; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." O! what an excellent state was this! when the impression of this law, whereof this was the summary, was entire and perfect; not the least inclination to violate it in any part, or in any point, either towards God, or towards a fellow creature.

And we may yet further, and more distinctly, consider this rectitude of the faculties of man's soul to stand in this —first, that the superior faculties of his mind and will, were more directly and exactly conformed to the divine mind and will—and secondly, that the inferior faculties were subject to the superior; this being the law of man's nature at first; that is, that though he had inferior faculties, as well as superior, suitable to his compounded nature, (being made up of an inward man and of an outward man, or of an intellectual and of a sensitive nature,) yet, these inferior faculties belonging to the sensitive nature, they were made so as to be obedient and subject to the superior; that is, to an enlightened mind, and to a holy will; so as to have no appetitions that were irregular or disorderly, of an inferior kind, or belonging to the sphere of sense, but what reason, governing the will, could prescribe to: no violent passions or appetitions in one kind or other, so as to love, or desire, or fear, or hope, or joy, or sorrow, or be angry inordinately, but according as a right mind should dictate, and as a right mind should command. And then,

[2.] As this moral image, superadded to the natural, and founded thereon, stood in holiness, (which we have thus far explained,) so it stood in happiness too, in sanctity and felicity; that is, as God is the blessed God for ever, so did this creature imitate him in his blessedness; bear the image of that upon him too. We must understand that he had a present inchoate blessedness; a present blessedness begun in a satisfaction to all his faculties, in having what was proportionable and accommodate to all the powers of his nature.

First, As to his superior faculties: herein stood the blessedness of this creature, that he had a mind capable of knowing God, and a will capable of enjoying him; and which did know God, and which did actually enjoy him: and it could not but be so; for here was no culpable darkness or cloud upon this mind; there was no corrupt or depraved inclination in this will: and God was pleased to exhibit himself, and manifest himself, to make himself known, and to offer himself to be his portion and God, according to the tenor of that covenant, that law of works, and that law of his creation, under which he was made. Therefore, there was nothing to hinder his present happiness: there was no aversion from God, no disinclination to him; but, a steady propension towards him. There was no guilt upon him, to make him afraid of approaching God; as it was with him soon after he fell, when he ran and hid himself. Vain creature! thinking there would be some darkness wherein he could hide himself from the Divine Majesty. But while he remained yet in his integrity, as there was no faulty darkness in his mind, so there was no depraved inclination in his will: but knowing God to be the best and highest good, most absolutely perfect, all-comprehending and every way suitable to him, his will could not but be propense towards him accordingly, so as then it must have been his sense in perfection, (though not unalterably,) which comes to be the sense again of the renewed soul: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and whom can I desire on earth besides thee?" When he had the beauties of a new-made creation all in view, a heaven that was then new, and an earth that was then new; yet "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and what is there upon earth that I desire besides thee?"

As to his inferior faculties, there was what was most grateful to them too. Man was created in a paradise, full of pleasantness, and of pleasant good things, which it was then lawful for him to enjoy without restraint, except that one forbidden tree. And he not only had the perception of all, all grateful, sensible good, but an interest in, and a power over, all. And you see, that God estates him in a dominion, sets him over all the works of his hands, in this inferior, lower world, and doth so immediately upon his having created him. "God blessed them, and said unto

them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every thing that moveth upon the earth."

What a glorious prince was man then! and into how great a principality did God put him as soon as he made him! Whatsoever was most suitable, and most delectable, for his enjoyment, in that kind of inferior and sensible good, was all put into his power; so as what innocent, well-tempered nature would choose, as most grateful to it, that he might choose, one thing excepted; which very exception, (as all exceptions do *firmare regulas*) was but a confirmation of his dominion over all the rest; and did but more fully speak his right and title to enjoy what he would beside. All this as to his inchoate happiness. But,

Secondly, Besides this, we must understand him to have had a title to continuing, and increasing, and, at length, perfect felicity. We are not to suppose him made in that state, which, if it had stood, should have been eternal, without change or alteration. But most rational it was, that God having newly created an intelligent creature, should create him in a state of probation, upon which was to follow a state of retribution; as it is most natural, that duty go before felicity; that there must be obedience before recompense. His full and final recompense was yet to come.

And the reason of the thing plainly speaks it. We cannot suppose, that God made man in a better condition than he made the angels; (a superior sort of creatures;) but it is plain, that he created them in a state of probation; otherwise it had been impossible that some of them should have fallen, and left their first station, forsaken it, and hereupon, to be "bound in chains of darkness, and reserved for the judgment of the great day." And it is plain, further, upon this account too; as to this earth, supposing man to have stood, (though God foresaw that he would not, that he would fall,) yet we must suppose his constitution to be such, as agree with the supposition of his standing too. It had been altogether impossible that, in the succession of many ages, this world would have contained all the men, if they had been innocent; and so, consequently, all immortal. But we must necessarily suppose, though not death, (for that was only introduced by sin,) yet some such kind of translation unto higher and more glorious regions; as from perfect, arbitrary good pleasure, Enoch and Elijah found at the hand of God.

And so, besides the actual felicity he had, there was a title to future felicity, supposing he had stood. For when the divine constitution runs in this tenor, "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," do but consider what the reverse of that must be: "Blessed is he that continueth in all things written in the book of the law to do them." If not continuing in all things written in God's law, to do them, must infer a curse, then to have continued must infer a blessing: and as that curse did put him into a worse state, that blessing must have put him into a better estate; otherwise, it had not been a state of retribution suitable to the foregoing state of probation.

Thus far, you have now the explication of this state, wherein God is said at first to have made man; that is, made him in his own image, the image that was natural and essential to man; and that image that was mortal and superadded. And can we look upon this as a useless doctrine? Of what importance is it to us to look back, and consider the original of this creature! what it was; and what it is! What man was in that perfect rectitude, of which we have had some account; and what he is in that forlorn and abject state into which he is now sunk and fallen. It is this that must make redeeming mercy, and our recovery by a Mediator, grateful. It was a noble expression of a heathen; *Nemo improbe conatur unde descenderat ascendere;* (speaking to this very case, the depraved condition of man as he now generally is, and what his state before was, of which they had hallucinations, though not distinct conceptions;) *no man blamably endeavours to ascend from whence he did descend. Capax est noster animus Dei, atque eo fertur, nisi vitia deprimant: we have minds capable of God; and towards him they would be carried if vice did not depress and sink them.* But nobody doth unwarrantably aim to ascend thither, whence he did descend; if he did descend, sink from so excellent a state, there must be some aim upwards, some aspiring to get up to that state again, or to somewhat agreeable thereto, by which the natural appetite in man to blessedness and felicity should be excited and stirred and put into action, and kept in action, even by the very law of his own nature.

LECTURE XX.*

THE more distinct *Use* and *application* of this subject, and such as may most aptly and properly be made, we shall now proceed to. And it will afford us a very various and a very copious use, if we seriously apply our minds to consider it. God created man in his own image. Why there are,

1. Sundry inferences of truth that we may collect and deduce. As, that man was, at first, a creature of great excellency, (whatsoever he is now become,) a noble and a glorious creature; the image of God being entire could not, sure, but be a very glorious thing. As it is blurred and defaced in a great measure, yet in respect of that remainder, or that mere ground of it, man is now said to be "the image and glory of God," 1 Cor. xi. 7. The image and glory of God, he is still, notwithstanding he hath diminished and disguised himself, as an intelligent being, a living thing: he hath a soul that is essentially life, or to which life is essential; that cannot cease to live; that hath a self-determining power belonging to its nature; that acts not under the laws of a fatal necessity, but according to reason and liberty, in the common affairs and actions of life.

Take man as he was at first, when those powers that belonged to his nature were unvitiated and pure, what a glorious creature was this creature! Dei-formed, made after the likeness of God. The world replenished with such creatures, what a delectable habitation had it been! to have so many God-like creatures inhabiting this world of ours, all representing God to one another, so many visible representations of divine knowledge, and divine light, and divine love, and divine purity! O! what an excellent creature was man in his original state!

(2.) We may further be informed, hence, of the more peculiar excellency of our souls; for we must consider them as the primary seat of the Divine image; "So God made man after his own image." Wherein stood that? Where lay this image, or where was it seated? What! in our bodily frame and structure? (as the anthropomorphites did formerly dream.) Was it a piece of clay that was made so like God in us? And therefore, if man be to be looked upon as an excellent sort of creature, we must understand wherein his true value lies, and whereupon men are to value themselves.

A great many are apt to value themselves because they have laden themselves with a great deal of thick clay; because they have a sort of propriety in much of this earth. Some highly value themselves upon an airy title; "I am such and such a dignified thing, among those with whom I dwell." Some are more vain to value themselves upon gay apparel, or because they have so and so trimmed and adorned those carcasses: but it is in respect of our mind and spirit, that we are the offspring of God, and bear the image of God; and if ever we have any thing truly valuable or excellent about us, there it must lie; a mind and spirit must be the seat and subject of it. Again,

(3.) We may learn, hence, that there is much of God to be understood by ourselves; for we were made after God's own image; and we may discern much of another thing by that which is really like it. Indeed, to direct the intention of our minds immediately towards God, is that which we are not so well capable of in this present state. The intuition of his glory our weak minds cannot admit of; "No man can see my face and live," saith God to Moses. But we can see our own faces; that is, the face of our own souls; we can take a view of them, and consi-

* Preached February 10th, 1694.

der what naturally, and in themselves, they are; that is, according to what there remains of true primitive nature in us; and so may discern and understand much of God, as his glory is reflected on ourselves.

Though we know not how to face the sun when it shines in its strength and glory, yet we can sustain it to behold its image in the water, and look upon it there. So we cannot bear it, to behold the immediate radiations of divine glory directly shining forth, but reflected; and as it hath produced its image in ourselves, so we may be capable of beholding it. And by what we see in ourselves, when we understand that we are made after God's image, that there is a thing called mind in ourselves, then God must be a mind; there is a spirit in man, and we are his offspring; then he, sure, must be a Spirit too; but an infinite, purer, and more perfect Spirit. If we find such a thing as love in our own natures, we may be sure that it is infinitely higher, and greater, and larger, and more perfect, every way, in God. But again,

(4.) We may further learn, hence, that upon the account of our being made after God's image, we have much the less reason to hesitate at the receiving of that most mysterious doctrine of the trinity in the Godhead; for if we seriously consider, we may discern the image and impress thereof in ourselves; and we find that we are made after God's image. There is none that doth so seriously contemplate himself, his own soul, but he may and must discern and acknowledge a trinity there; those primary principles which, considered in their conjunction, do carry a most manifest and express representation of God in this respect; to wit, active power, intellect, and love, those three great primalities in God, his word (who best knows his own nature) doth, upon all occasions, repeatedly express and inculcate to us. And the very like hereof we find in ourselves, considering these things in ourselves; not severed, but conjunct; that is, a power to act, and to act according to understanding; and so act towards things that we love, and towards which there is a propension from a suitableness in ourselves to the things that we act towards.

Any one that will make himself his own study, must discern and acknowledge such things in himself as do make a real trinity; one and the same soul having active power belonging to it, understanding belonging to it, and love belonging to it, which, though all meet and unite in one and the same soul, are yet diverse and distinct from one another: for my power is not my understanding, and my understanding is not love; but all these do meet together in one and the same soul. So that considering man made after the image of God, the doctrine of the Trinity claims to be received with so much the more facility and agreeableness; we finding, so manifestly, the impress thereof upon our own souls. And so we may upon many things in the created universe besides; yea, and we may find running through all things, but most manifestly and discernibly in ourselves, concerning whom it is most eminently said, that "we were made after God's image." Again,

(5.) We may further learn hence, that since man was made after the image of God, (so excellent and noble a creature as this image impressed upon him must speak him and make him,) then sure, God did, in making this creature, design him for higher and greater things than can be compassed within this temporary state. He never did design, in making such a creature as man, to confine him to time and to this lower world. For as he is a creature made after the image of God, he is made with capacities of far higher and greater things than this world can contain, or than time can measure.

If we look upon the present inhabitants of this world, so many minds and spirits inhabiting flesh, and cast about our eyes this way and that way, how thick is this same material world! how thick is it set with minds, with spirits, as so many diamonds sparkling in mud! Any one would say, "This is not their proper place; here are so many diamonds scattered here and there in dirt; surely they are not always to be there! Spiritual and immortal minds inhabiting flesh, and only casting their present rays upon low and sensible things; surely it will not always be thus." Did God make such creatures, did he make man, after his own likeness, for so mean and so low ends and purposes, as they are every where intent upon in this their present state? Did he make man after his own image, only to support and animate a little portion of breathing clay? Did he make him only to take this flesh to keep it awhile from turning into a putrid, stinking carcass. Was this all that a spiritual, immortal mind was made for?

Men should understand, by reflecting upon their original state, what the capacity of their nature was; and that they must be made for some other state, and for higher and greater things, than they commonly apply themselves to mind while they are here. You have so many minds dwelling in flesh; and many, but for a very little while. But suppose it, as long as men do more ordinarily live upon earth, why to have a mind, a spirit, created and put into flesh to inhabit that, suppose twenty, or thirty, or forty, or fifty, or sixty years, or to the utmost pitch that the lives of men do commonly reach to; and then that creature disappears and is gone. That flesh which that mind inhabiteth, turns to dust; the soul is fled and gone; here is no more appearance of this creature, this particular creature, upon this particular stage: what are we to conclude upon this, then? but that sure these have their parts to act in another state, upon an eternal stage, that shall never be taken down. Here are so many God-like creatures brought into this world, and put in flesh, only to abide here such a certain number of years, and there is an end of them. This can never be thought, that God did make so many creatures after his own image, for so mean and ungodlike ends and purposes. And again,

(6.) We many further learn, hence, that an abode in the flesh, is not inconsistent with a very excellent state of life: for God did at first make man after his own image, of whose creation, as to the outward man, (of which I spake to you distinctly,) we are told, he was only made (as his name Adam doth import) out of the earth; but God breathed into him the breath of life, that intellectual vital life: he placed that spirit in him, by the inspiration whereof he came to be an understanding creature; and therein to resemble him that made him. Though this mind and spirit was to dwell in flesh, yet a very excellent state of life might be transacted here in this state: for admit that a mind and spirit be united with such flesh as we now inhabit and dwell in, yet here it hath the image of God entire and undepraved in it: not only a capacity of understanding, and of willing, and of acting, this way and that, but of doing all these aright, with a due rectitude adhering to each faculty; not remotely, not inseparably, as the sad events have shown; but really and truly, so as that they might have remained in the state wherein they were made. O! then, how excellent a life might have been lived here, on these terms, in this world!

Though our likeness to God did not consist in this fleshly part of ours, or had not that for its seat and subject, yet it might very well consist with our having such a fleshly part about us, when there was pure and incorrupt integrity in all the powers and faculties of the soul of man: to have his soul replenished with the knowledge of God; possessed with a holy and adoring disposition, in a continual aptitude to look to, and a continual inclination to delight in, God, and in his converse; together with a universal love to one another, under that notion of being made after the image of God, as they should behold God's resemblance in one another. And O! what a happy world were this, and how pleasantly, and with what delight, might time have been transacted here: a very pleasant, happy, excellent state of life might consist with dwelling in flesh.

Such, in whom the image of God, to wit, his moral image, hath been (though less perfectly) restored, yet how pleasantly have they lived here in this world, amidst all the abounding wickedness of it: such a man as Noah: such a one as Enoch, who walked with God so many hundred years in this world. This is not to live an unhappy life, to walk with God every day, to live in his fear, and live in his communion. Is this to live unhappily?

Men are apt to transfer all the causes of their complaint to other things, and set them at a remote distance from themselves. Some, when they do evil, or evil befall them, accuse their stars or external circumstances. But we have

nothing to accuse but our own ill inclinations. If we live evil lives, bad and sinful lives, or miserable lives, in this world, it is our own fault; for mere dwelling in flesh imposeth no necessity upon us, of being either sinful or miserable creatures. And that we might be convinced of this, we have the exemplification of such a life in our blessed Lord living in flesh (after all flesh had corrupted their ways) without taint. Therefore, being in flesh, as such, doth necessitate none, either to live wicked or miserable lives in this world; the mind and spirit of man being stamped with the image of God.

(7.) If man were at first made after God's own image, he must now, sure, be a very degenerate creature; the degeneracy of man must needs be exceeding great: how ungodlike a creature is he become! How unlike to God do men generally live and act, here in this world! This ought to be considered with deep and bitter regret. It is true that the natural likeness still remains, as it cannot but do, because it is natural, because it is the very nature of man himself. As his mind and spirit (being the immediate seal of the divine image) is a living thing, an understanding thing, a voluntary, active thing, this way and that, the natural image cannot but remain as long as man is man. But the degeneracy is with reference to the moral, superadded image; for that was at first superadded, and is *still due;* a thing concerning which we must say, it is a *Debitum esse;* and which, in reference to the natural image, is as the more curious lines of a picture are to the first rude draught. It is true, that first rude draught, consisting of maimed strokes, doth show the true symmetry and proportion of the parts, in such a picture, to one another; but while every thing is yet wanting that tends to make up the comeliness and beauty, it is a very ungrateful spectacle that a man hath before his eyes in looking upon such a thing.

The natural powers that do belong to the soul of a man, show his original capacity, what he was capable of; then all these capacities are to be filled up, as the rude draught of a picture should be, with what would add beauty, and the appearance of comeliness and vigour to it, as far as the pencil can express that. Here is a capacity in the very nature of man, of knowing much; but look upon that understanding power divested and destitute of all true knowledge. Here is a will capable of choosing, and of enjoying with highest complacency, the best and most delectable good; but totally divested of any such propension and inclination. And, here is a soul that is a spiritually active being; but it is active now any way but towards God, by whom it was made. Why in these very ruins of human nature, you may discern what originally it was.

Take the walls of some noble palace, yet standing: we will suppose all rooms to remain distinct from one another as they were, but it is totally unfurnished. It was inhabited, it may be, by some excellent person; but he is gone and hath left it: there was an honourable family that lived in splendour there; but they are removed, and now there is nothing to be beheld but bare walls: there be the rooms, the several apartments, as they were; but inhabited by nothing but owls and vultures; a habitation of dragons and serpents. And such is the soul of man, destitute of the divine, moral image, and of that holy rectitude which was the furniture and ornament of each several faculty and power.

We may here see what man was in his original state; and hence see and collect how great his present degeneracy is. O! how art thou fallen! what art thou fallen to, thou Lucifer, son of the morning! A God-like creature, one made after God's image, a little lower than the angels, that did so perfectly resemble him; and now sunk into so low a degree of darkness, and impurity, and misery, and death: of which also we were not capable, if the natural image did not remain, if he had not an understanding still, and a will still, and an active power still. And then,

(8.) You may further learn, hence, what the work of regeneration is to perform in the souls of men; and of how absolute necessity such a work is to be effected and brought about there. So God made man after his own image. That plainly tells us what regeneration hath to do; that is, to restore that image wherein it was defective and lost. That must be the business of regeneration; considering together what the original state of man was, made after God's image, and considering what his present state is, his degenerate state, it is easy to collect what his regenerate state must be; a renovation, a state of renovation after the same image that man was impressed with at first, consisting of knowledge, (not only in a capacity to know, but in knowledge,) and in righteousness and true holiness. Not only in having the faculties that are capable of these, but in having these things themselves impressed into these faculties; this regeneration must do: or the restoring us to ourselves, or repairing the image of God that was lost; that must be the business of regeneration. As man was made after the image of God at first, in his first creation; in his second creation, when he is made a new creature, he must be created again after God. The new man must be put on, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And this image is renewed in knowledge, as those two texts speak, Ephes. iv. 24. and Col. iii. 10. compared. Thus, is this part of the doctrine of the text improvable to the learning of several truths that do depend upon it, and that lie in connexion with it. Again,

2. It may be improved too, and very largely, in representing, and reprehending, several sinful evils that this wretched world abounds with; by which it appears how much men, by sin, have fallen short of the glory of God; such characters of his glory having been impressed at first upon them. Why, to consider such things as these, that too evidently and too commonly appear in the temper of men's minds, and in the course of their practice, here in this world: for instance,

To consider how low designs men do generally drive. What! is this God-like? Is this becoming a God-like sort of creatures, such as man was at first, when they wear out their days here in this world, and make it their business to serve divers lusts and pleasures? What a base kind of servitude is this! Is this the creature made after God's image? men to spend their days in the pursuit of shadows and trifles? Is there any resemblance of God in this? Is this like a creature that had in his own original and primitive state, a representation of divine in it, which was to conduct his whole course? And again, consider not only what men do pursue, that their minds and hearts are set upon; but (which carries more of horror in it) what they decline, and what their minds and hearts are set against. Men made after the image of God, and yet transacting their course in continual ungodliness. What! thou made after the image of God, and yet an ungodly creature, and yet live an ungodly life in this world, when thou hast a soul about thee that can know God, that hath a capacity of knowing God, and of choosing him, and of loving him, and of delighting in him? That there should be in such a creature, stamped at first with the divine image and likeness, a disaffection to God; not only no inclination, but disinclination. What! disinclination to thine own true Pattern? disaffection to thine own Original? Thou wast made like God; why dost thou shun him? why dost thou fly from him? Thou carriest the natural characters of his image upon thee whithersoever thou goest. And what! art thou running away from God with his image on thee, in the remainders of it? The remainders of it thou hast upon thy soul; a mind that can understand, a spirit that can and must live; and thou art running away from God with his own image upon thee. What a monstrous thing is that! And again,

3. It might, in the third place, instruct us in several duties that are also very congruous and connatural to this part of the doctrine of this text. As,

(1.) More frequently to look back to our original estate. Such a truth as this made known, published to us, standing upon record in the sacred volumes, doth continually and repeatedly call upon us to look back, to consider and bethink ourselves what we were in our original state, made after God's own image, a God-like sort of creatures.

(2.) It will be our duty, hence, to be now ashamed of ourselves in our present degenerate state. It is no shame to a mean creature that was always so, to be now so; no shame to a worm that it is a worm, to a toad that it is a toad. But that man should become an impure and a poisonous worm, part of the serpent's seed, this is a most shameful thing, and ought to be considered with the most

confounding shame. We should even be startled at ourselves to think what, from such a conformity to God, we are now come to. And,

(3.) It should put us upon inquiring and listening after any means or ways of recovery. It would become a thinking creature, (as man naturally is,) apprehending as even the pagans, (the more refined of them generally have,) that men are not now what they were at first. And it would put such upon considering, "Is there no way of recovery?" And it hath put even pagans themselves (destitute of all revealed light) upon many considerations of that kind, insomuch as that we find several of them to have written treatises concerning the purgative and ornative virtues. It shows us to have a great deal more of stupidity among us, than was among pagans themselves, if we have no thoughts about restitution, about being restored, about being recovered out of so low a state as we find ourselves relapsed into, compared with that which we know was original to us. It should make our minds full of thoughts from day to day. "Is there no way to become again what once we were?" to have minds, and wills, and inclinations, and affections, so rectified as we find, and must apprehend to have been, in our first state? Is there no way to get into that conformity to God and acquaintance with him, as to be able to lead my life with God, which was the thing most agreeable to my first state? And one that would use the understanding of a man, when he hears of a better state, that was original to him, would certainly be upon his inquiries—"Is there no way of recovering, no way of getting back into such an estate again?" And again,

(4.) It should render the Gospel very dear to us, that doth so expressly reveal to us such a way, wherein the image of God is recoverable; and thereupon, converse with him, and a continual intercourse with him, are become possible to us. At present where there is no likeness, there can be no converse, no disposition, no agreeableness or suitableness. How dear then should that Gospel be, that is not only God's revelation, but his way and method to bring this about. To this end he hath revealed his Christ to us, his first Image, his primary Image. He that is said to be "the Image of the invisible God, the first-born before all the creation;" in whom his glory shines as "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father;" the archetypal image, according to which the image is to be renewed again in us. That Gospel that reveals this to us, and which is designed to be God's instrument for the making of the impression afresh on our souls, how precious should it be to us! For his glory shines through it, as through a glass; that, "beholding this glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Since this, I say, is the design of that very Gospel under which we live, O! how dear should that very Gospel be to us! By this, the image of God may be restored, which hath, in so great a measure, been defaced and lost out of our souls. And it again shows it to be our duty,

(5.) To aspire to the highest pitch of that perfection, in conformity to God, that these souls of ours are any way capable of; especially, that we should be continually aspiring unto the perfection of that state from whence we are fallen. Take the forementioned instruction of a pagan to that purpose. Whereas some might be apt to imagine, and their thoughts might suggest to them, "It is a presumptuous thing for me to think of being made like God, to be holy as God is holy, and to be blessed as God is blessed," and the like; we should consider what we are, that as that heathen said; "It is no fault, no blameable thing in any one to endeavour to ascend to that state or pitch, from which he did descend; we have a mind capable of God; and it would be carried towards him if vice did not depress and sink it. It is therefore matter of duty, from the consideration that we are to aim and aspire after such a state. I do not aim to be what I was, and what I ought to be, in duty towards him that made me, as well as consulting any interest of my own, in the first place: for I am first his, before I can consider myself as my own: and therefore, in duty towards him, the Author of my being, I ought to be aspiring and aiming at this, to have his image renewed in me, and to be restored in this respect to what I was.

* Preached February 17th, 1694.

LECTURE XXI.*

Rom. v. 12.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

You know we have, of late, been treating at large of the creation, and particularly and more especially, of the creation of man, and his original state, as he was created after God's image; not only his natural, but his moral image, so as to resemble him, both in holiness and blessedness. We come now, from these words, to consider the lapsed, degenerate state of man, now grown most unlike to God in both these respects; to wit, of purity, and of felicity; sunk into a state of sin, and into a state of misery; become a most deplorable, forlorn creature.

An amazing change! And indeed, it might amaze us, that it doth amaze us no more; that we can consider so astonishing a thing as this, with so little concern: when it is not a thing remote from us, but incurs our observation and sense, unavoidably, every day; whether we look about us, or whether we look into ourselves. And it doth so much the more need that such a subject should be insisted upon, the lapse of man, and the lapsed state into which he is come, and in which he is.

It is true, indeed, that usually, immediately upon considering that subject of the creation, providence useth and is wont to be treated in the next place. And that is a method rational enough in some respects. But it being my design to speak of the heads of religion as practically as God shall enable me; and the providence of God, (when we shall come to consider that,) being for this purpose, is chiefly to be considered as it doth respect man; and the course of his providence towards man, having been for almost six thousand years backward conversant about fallen man, lapsed man, whereas it was conversant about innocent man but a very little while; it seems to me more reasonable, with reference to the design in hand, to consider God's providence (especially when we are to consider it in reference to man) rather, first, as conversant about fallen man. And so, first, to consider his fall, and that state into which he was fallen, rather than to bring in the whole head of a discourse about providence, with reference to the very little inch of time wherein he stood in innocency.

And further, too, because the lapsed world of mankind is, as such, thereupon, manifestly put into the hands and under the government of the Redeemer, who died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of the living and dead; yea, and not only the lapsed world of mankind, but even the whole creation, as a surplusage of remunerative dignity and glory, for that free and voluntary susception and undertaking of his, it will be, thereupon, most suitable to my design, to bring in the consideration of providence, under the mediatory kingdom of our Lord, and as it belongs to that vicegerency of his which he holds now, not only over this lapsed world, but over the whole creation, as by whom all things consist and are held together. And so, the discourse of the fall, in reference to this design of mine, very fitly intervening, I have chosen to pitch it on this place, from this text of Scripture now read.

In which we may take notice, that there is that which is called a *protasis*, the former part of a sentence, without an *apodosis*, or latter part in form, answering thereunto. Through that rich abundance of divine sense wherewith the apostle's mind and understanding did abound, and was replenished, it was not so well capable of being comprehended and limited by rules of art, or within artificial limits. But yet we may take notice too, that in the following verses there is that *apodosis*, the latter part of the intended sentence in substance, most fully and most copiously represented; the design of the whole paragraph being, in short, this only, to show that as Adam, the first man, was to be a root and fountain of sin and death unto all his seed; so the second Adam would be, of righteousness and life to all his seed, there being a resemblance in

the former of the latter, according to what is elsewhere said, that "the first Adam was a figure of him that was to come," of the second that was to follow; though there is not, it is true, an absolute and exact parallel or parity, as is never to be expected, in such cases, throughout.

My business will only be with what we call the *protasis*, the former of these parts, and that abstractly and by itself considered, without present reference to what follows in the succeeding verses. And so we are to show you, that whereas, according to the tenor of the last discourse, man was created after God's image, not only his natural but his moral image, made like him in respect of sanctity and felicity; he is now fallen into a state wherein he is most unlike God in these two things; to wit, into a state of sin, and into a state of misery. Both these the text expressly represents and lays before us; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

Here was the state of the one, the first apostate; he sins first, and thereby becomes miserable. He did represent and resemble God in holiness, purity, and sanctity; now he is become a sinner. He did represent and resemble God in felicity and blessedness, in perfection and fulness of life; (not absolute perfection, it is true, not consummate perfection, but a perfection suitable to his present state;) and now he is become a creature lost in death; death immediately pursued the sin into which he lapsed and fell.

And thus it was, not only with the first sinner personally considered, but with all that were virtually comprehended in him; the whole offspring, the whole progeny; and the same two things have ensued upon them all; that is, sin, by that one being introduced, hath spread itself over all; and death, that way introduced, hath also diffused itself, and equally spread over all; all lost in death, inasmuch as all have sinned.

Very plain it is, that general notices of these things have obtained in the pagan world; and some of the more instructed and refined pagans have spoken strangely about this; magnifying the original and primitive state of man at first; as that it was a state wherein they did partake of a divine portion; and wherein they lived in that converse with God; and there was among them that righteousness, and that mutual love towards one another, as made this world a pleasant region, and most delectable habitation. We have large discourses in Plato to this purpose; and divers do speak as largely concerning the degenerate state of man;—that he is not the creature that he at first was. And they speak it with a great and most affectionate lamentation, that there should be such a change.

But yet, they having nothing in reference to these matters to guide them, but either dark or dubious conjectures, or false traditions, they could not but remain very ignorant of much: that is, how long that innocent state did continue; and, wanting divine revelation to guide them herein, some have drawn forth that state to a vast tract of time, speaking of it under the term of the "golden age;" and though it be generally acknowledged among them that there is a degeneracy in man, yet, how he came to fall, and wherein his fall at first stood, and how the dismal effects came to ensue so generally upon mankind, in reference to these things, they speak (as it could not but be) as men quite in the dark.

But here we have a most express and punctual account, and as comprehensive as we can have, in one text of Scripture, in these words of this text; that is, both of the fall of the first man; and then of the fallen state of all men; and both these in the mentioned respects, sin and death, transgression and the consequent doom.

And here are, in reference hereto, these three general heads that require to be distinctly spoken to—the fall of the first transgressor, this one that first sinned; and—the sinful and miserable state of all the whole race of men hereupon; and—the consecution of the latter of these upon the former, that by one that sinned there should be such a diffusion of sin, and consequently of death, upon the whole race of men: how from the one man's sin, whereby it first entered into the world, and by which death entered with it, there should be such a transfusion with it of sin and death too, through the world. These are the three general heads of discourse to be insisted upon. We begin with the first,

I. The fall of the first man. And in reference thereto, we have these four things more distinctly to be spoken to—wherein his sin stood by which he fell—how it came to pass that he (an innocent creature, made upright, as in that Eccl. vii. 29.) should thus transgress—what the death was that was threatened and did ensue hereupon; and—the dueness of this death upon his having once so sinned.

1. We are to consider his sin in itself, wherein that stood; and it is plain,

(1.) That it stood in the breach of a positive precept, which had said to him, that he must by all means abstain from the fruit of such a tree; as you see, Gen. ii. 16, 17. "Of all the trees of the garden," wherein God had placed and set him, he might freely eat; but of that one, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he must by no means eat; in the day wherein he did eat of it he must die, fall under death, become mortal. There are here some that would fain imagine another way of understanding this whole history of man's fall, whom I shall meet with upon a more particular occasion by and by. But this is the first step by which man departed from God; to wit, his making bold in an interdict, in reference whereto he had a positive expression of the divine pleasure, in that signification which God gave him by his mind relating to that matter. He having both a liberty given him, and a limitation: a liberty—"thou mayest freely eat of all the trees of the garden;" and a limitation—"of this one thou mayest not eat;" and that interdict enforced by that tremendous sanction, "Eat and die; if thou eatest it will be mortal to thee;" it was a breach of this positive law. Take that, (as we shall have occasion to note to you more distinctly anon,) I say, take that act of eating in conjunction with all the concurrents whatsoever it did lead to, or whatsoever was concomitant of that transgressive act. Herein, I say, it first stood, the breach of a positive law. But,

(2.) It did not stand in that alone, but in the violation of the whole law of nature too. This positive law would never have been understood or known, if it had not been, some way or other, expressly signified. But we must understand a law of nature, besides, to have been given to Adam; to wit, by impression upon his heart; for the remains of such a law are still to be found in the nature of man, as the apostle in that 2d Rom. takes notice: "Men do show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences either accusing *or* excusing," or accusing *and* excusing, *alternatim*, by turns; sometimes accusing, and sometimes excusing, as they did comport or not comport with the dictates of their own conscience, which is appointed to be the conservatory of the precepts of that law.

And of this, there are divers celebrated passages among heathens themselves, who have called it not a written but a "born law," the *non scripta, sed nata lex;* so Cicero, and divers others, speak much to the same purpose. This same law of nature was transgressed in the transgression of this positive law, this particular interdictive precept or negative command. For that particular precept had its foundation in the universal natural law; that is, this one comprehensive law must contain in it all the laws, that could be supposed; that whatsoever our great Creator should signify to be his mind and pleasure, that, his intelligent, reasonable creature should be obliged to comply with him in. This sums up the whole law of nature, and so cannot but virtually comprehend all positive laws too; when once, by any such law, there is a signification given of the divine pleasure, and mind, and will, of him that made me: I ought to obey, when I know his mind; I ought to be ruled and governed by that expression thereof, which he is pleased to afford. This law of nature (comprehensive of all laws) was broken in this transgression; and sundry great breaches of it, which strike deep into the very foundation, must be contained in this transgression. As for instance,

Here was contempt of the highest and most indisputable authority. God said. "Do not this thing:" the creature saith, "Aye, but I will do it." God saith, "If thou doest it thou diest:" he saith, "I will do it though I die for it." Here was no fearfulness of his displeasure, and of his punitive justice, the very sword whereof was drawn, and did glitter before his eyes, in the commination and threatening wherewith God fenced his law. Here was disbelief of

the first eternal truth. Here was believing of a creature against the Creator. Whether that were an innocent creature, or a fallen creature, though he could not tell, yet he could tell it was a creature that spake to him and tempted him; and yet, this creature is believed against God; and here was an interpretative, constructive saying, "God is a liar: this creature speaks more truly than he." Here was vain curiosity, an affectation of knowing more than God yet thought fit for his estate. Here was impatiency, of waiting for God's further most seasonable and opportune discovery. Here was discontent with that excellent state in which God had set him. Here was pride and ambition; he must be some greater thing than God had made him; "Ye shall be as gods." This is contained in it. So that we are not to think that the bare act of eating the forbidden fruit did constitute all the sin of man. But there are all these horrid things complicated and meeting together in it, which made it a sin most exceedingly sinful; especially for him that was hitherto in a right mind; upon whom clear light shone; no cloud upon his understanding; no perverseness hitherto in his will; a power to master the appetite, and keep under the otherwise mutinous inclinations of sensitive nature. Take all together, and we find, here was not only a transgression of the positive precept, but here was also a most manifest breach of the natural law, in the greatest and deepest foundations thereof. Now, herein stood this sin, which was the first thing to be spoken to about that first more general head. But,

2. We are to consider, next, how this should come to pass, that a creature perfectly intelligent, and perfectly holy, yet in his integrity should come to be guilty of so horrid a violation of the divine law as this. It is an astonishing thing, to think of, or speak to; but an account is to be given of it so far as God hath been pleased to give it us. And so, to the inquiry, "How came this sin into the world by this one man?" we must answer, "It came so as the divine history do inform us." The law given him, you have in the 2d chapter of Gen. 16, 17 verses: the violation of it, in the 3d chapter, at large, as distinctly as the divine wisdom did think needful for us. And so you find several things to concur, and must be understood so to have done, to the bringing of this matter about, or that there should be such a thing as sin thus entering into the world. As,

(1.) We are to consider herein the divine permission. Most certain it is, that God did permit, or otherwise it could not have been. And it is easy and obvious to us all to apprehend, that if he had pleased, he could easily have hindered it. The event shows that he did permit; for it did evince it did come to pass, and he could easily have prevented so dismal an issue, if he had thought fit. But concerning that permission; it is true we are to refer it to the divine permission, in very great part, to whom it did belong to prescribe, but not to be prescribed unto; that he might do what he pleased with his own; give more or less of a gracious influence as he saw fit. But we are not to ascribe it to his sovereignty alone, or to the absoluteness of his power, but to that power of his, guided by the supreme wisdom, that discerns all the reasons of things.

We have, you know, discoursed largely upon that text, "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." All things that he doth and permits; all things that he suffers and lets his people do; all do fall under the determination of the wisest, and deepest, and most righteous counsels: nothing is done rashly; nothing incogitantly done, or permitted to be done. That therefore, is to be considered in the first place, how it came to pass, that there should be such a transgression of the divine law, both positive and natural together—God permitted it. And,

(2.) This is further to be considered, that the apostate angels (who made a defection from God) were manifestly apostatized, and had made that defection before. They were gone off from God, had made a schism in heaven, and forsook their first station. And,

(3.) Nothing was, hereupon, more obvious, than that they should affect to draw this new-made creature (man) into a combination and confederacy with them, against the rightful, sovereign Lord of all. And,

(4.) It is plain, that as they were inclined to it, (and easy it was to suppose that they would be inclined to it,) so we find that they did actually attempt it. It is likely, one of their number, and, most probably, their prince, the arch-devil; it was he that made this attempt. The matter is put into his hands to make trial, whether he can draw off this new-made creature from his loyalty, and involve him in the same guilt and misery with himself and his companions; and bring him under the displeasure and curse of his and their Maker, as they were.

It is very plain, that it was the devil that tempted in, and by, the serpent. The Scripture doth expressly call him "the old serpent, the devil, and Satan," as you see, Rev. xii. 9. That puts the matter out of all doubt. And that he might not fright Adam, (who possibly might hitherto be ignorant of a superior order of creatures,) by appearing to him (as it were) in some angelic form; and Adam very well knowing, that there were not any other men besides himself; therefore, the devil slides into the body of the serpent to tempt. I know no reason we have to suppose or imagine that the devil did form, of condensed air, another body like that of a serpent, (though that might be no impossible thing to do, as there are frequent instances in following times and ages,) but there being such a creature already formed, it is a great deal more probable, that he should insinuate and slide into the body of that: and how often hath he possessed human bodies, even when they have been alive, and sometimes when they have been dead! Histories give us many instances of it; and it is, therefore, not at all strange that he should possess the body of the serpent for such a purpose as this, and some way or other speak in, or by it. He hath spoken in the bodies of men, many times, (the stories themselves that we have of that sort importing plainly so much,) not making use of their organs of speech, but speaking more deeply in them than their organs of speech did lie. And so it is not strange, that though such a creature was not naturally furnished with the power of speech, yet that he might speak in it, and by it.

And now here it is true, there are those who are so overwise above, and beyond, what is written, that they think it a mean thing to understand the history of the creation, and then, of the fall of man, according to the true literal meaning and import of the words wherein it is given. And as they are too wise (I hope) to be our instructors in such a case, so I hope we shall not be foolish enough to be instructed and taught by them. The apostle himself, if it were mean and low to understand that history in the literal sense, was content to be of that low form, when he told us "the serpent beguiled Eve," and "he was afraid lest they should be beguiled, as the serpent by his subtlety beguiled Eve," 2 Cor. xi. 3. Pray let us content ourselves to be of that lower form with the apostle; that is, modestly understand this history just as it lies.

For the history of the creation, some are sick of it, because they cannot tell how to reconcile the literal account thereof, in the beginning of Genesis, with the philosophy of their Descartes: as if his reputation were a thing more studiously to be preserved than that of Moses; though, yet, more might be said than hath been, to reconcile with rational principles, even the whole history of the creation: and it might be discerned even by themselves, if there were not more ill will, and an affectation to slur Scripture in the case, than the love of reason. Most plain it is, that it is a very ill compliment which they put upon Moses, when they would have him to have written the story of the creation, and of the fall of man, in that form wherein we find it, only to amuse the people over whom he was set: some account or other must be given; and such a one as this, would serve their turn, and help to awe them, and render them more governable.

This is the account that some presume to give of this part of the divine revelation: and therein, they express a great deal less reverence for and esteem of Moses, than some heathens have done: Diodorus Siculus, in particular, who magnifies him as one of the wisest men that the world hath had. But certainly, as these persons do take off all that can be imagined, from the integrity of any honest historian, so they did it without any respect to the reputation of his wisdom too. For if it were to be supposed that the fidelity of an historiographer were to be dispensed and laid

aside: and if Moses could have obtained of himself to have done that, surely he might easily have contrived a more plausible romance than this that is supposed to be feigned by him: so as that no man can imagine what should induce him to give such a narrative, but only the known revealed truth of the things themselves. If one would have deviated from that, it might have been with a great deal more speciousness than this hath been.

And it is, likewise, a very ill compliment that such, too, put upon the people of the Jews; yea, and upon all mankind; to suppose that they would be capable of being so imposed upon, if there be not evidence in the things themselves related to them and reported.

But it is the greatest slur of all the rest, which they put upon divine revelation, that when that appears and is so manifestly allowed to have been written for the instructing of men, it should yet be supposed to be written for the cheating of them. It is, therefore, plain and out of question, that the devil did tempt this new-made creature man, in the serpent, into which he insinuated himself to this purpose, unto this transgression. And that is the fourth thing we are to consider about the manner of this sin coming to pass.

(5.) And that the devil applied himself to Eve apart (as it is apparent) from er husband, when there was not an opportunity of consulting with him, she being, though (it may be) not of less clear, yet of less strong intellectuals; and in that respect the weaker vessel: her he attempts; for Adam was not deceived, but Eve; that is, not first, but she first; and so was made use of as an instrument to deceive him, as the apostle tells us, 1 Tim. ii. 14.

And because time doth allow me to go no further now, let me only close what hath been now said with a caution to that sex; and especially those that are in the conjugal relation. Let them consider what God hath appointed that relation for. He gave Eve to Adam as a help meet. We see what a help she proved; a help to destroy him; a help to undo him, and his whole race and progeny; perverting the very end for which God appointed that relation. O! let such consider and look to it, that are apt to tempt their husbands into sin, because of their relation; because of the affection that they bear to them; because of the constant opportunity they have to insinuate into them, when their pride, and their vanity, and their vindictiveness, very often, must be all employed and set on work to draw their relative into sinful combinations with them against God, when he appointed them to be helps in the relation and capacity wherein they are set. They should be helps to duty; helps God-ward; helps heaven-ward; joint helps, walking in the way to life. It lies in my way to note this; and let it be seriously considered and noted, according to the import and concernment of it.

LECTURE XXII.*

BUT we are to consider in the next place, and that as the main thing more immediately to be considered in this case.

(6.) The primitive state of human nature, in respect of the morality which was founded there, and wherein, or wherewith, man was at first created. You may remember, that speaking of that former great head, the state of man by creation, from that text which tells us of "God's having made him after his own image," and in speaking of the moral image of God upon man in his creation, comprehending both sanctity and felicity, that there we told you we were neither to lay the matter too low, nor too high: not so low as to make it thence apprehensible, that the sin of man was intrinsically necessary, however it might be extrinsically, with reference to divine foresight; that it should be thought intrinsically necessary would be of horrid consequence to admit; for that would be to make the Author of his being the Author of his sin. Therefore, great care was to be taken, not to lay the matter so low as to exclude the intrinsic possibility of man's standing: nor again, was it to be laid so high as to exclude the possibility of his falling; which the sad event doth show.

The matter, therefore, of his fall, is principally to be resolved into the estate wherein, upon the account of his morals, he was created; that is, that he was made innocent, but not impeccable; he was made a sinless creature, but not with an impossibility of sinning: and in particular, his mind, it was made apprehensive, very capable of true and right notions of things, but not incapable of wrong: it was made without error, but not indeceptible, under no present deception as it was made, and yet, not under an impossibility of being deceived and imposed upon by false representations and colours. And so as to his will, it was created without any determination to good; it was made in that state of liberty as to be in a certain sort of equipoise, according as things should be truly or falsely represented, by the leading faculty, to the mind and understanding. And so hereupon, according to this original state of human nature, there was a possibility remaining of what, no doubt, did ensue. As,

[1.] Faulty omission in several respects. As,

First, Of prayer, in the instant and article of temptation. It had been a creaturely part in that instant, presently to have looked up; "Lord, I am thy creature, the work of thine hands, leave me not to err in such a critical season as this." And again,

Secondly, Of dependance. The creature, as such, was by the law of his creation obliged to depend; that is, a reasonable creature, capable of being governed by a law, was obliged to an intelligent, voluntary dependance, as all creatures, as creatures, have a natural dependance: and it cannot be otherwise with any of them. There should, by such a dependance, have been a derivation and drawing in a sustaining, strengthening influence, *de novo*, as the exigency of such a case did require.

Thirdly, And of consideration. There was, no doubt, an omission of that; that he did not use the understanding power and faculty that God had endued his nature with, to ponder, and weigh, and balance things in that juncture of time. He being essentially, as to his mind and spirit, a thinking creature, should have used thoughts with more equity; that is, have balanced things on the one hand and the other. And this, it is plain, was not done. And there was no doubt,

Fourthly, An omission of the exercise of the great principle of love, which could not but be most connatural to such a creature: love to God, love to himself, love to his posterity. This principle was not excited and drawn forth into act and exercise, as it ought, in such an exigency, to have been. And this as easily made way for,

[2.] Faulty commissions even in the inward man, mental and cordial ones in the mind, and in the heart. As,

First, The allowing himself to aim at greater measures of knowledge, than God had yet thought fit for him; whereas, he should have been content with a state in which God had set him in this respect, and have waited for his further manifestations to him, of what it was fit and convenient for him to know. It is plain, the temptation was specious unto the cognitive power of man; "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" a very plausible temptation to a creature made capable of knowing much, and therefore, could not but have a desire (suitable to such a capacity) of knowing more than he yet did. He might easily apprehend that this his state, in this respect, was not so perfect, though it was not sinfully imperfect. He was guilty of no culpable and blameable ignorance before; but not endued with so much knowledge, but that he could easily apprehend it might grow. But it was to have grown in a regular way; partly by his own improvement of his reasoning power; and partly by a patient expectation of God's further manifestations and discoveries to him. But he complies with the temptation that thus is given to his cognitive faculty, catching at a sudden power of knowing, beyond what belonged to his compass, and was within his reach, by ordinary and allowable methods and means. And then there was no doubt,

Secondly, A sinful cherishing of sensitive appetite, which it belongs to a reasonable creature to have governed, and

[* Preached February 24th, 1694.]

kept within limits. He was of a compound nature; intellectual, and sensible; and the sensitive nature is permitted to aspire and set up for the government, and it is yielded. A great violation of the law of his nature, and that order that God had settled, at first, of superiority and inferiority between his natural powers. The object, no doubt, was very tempting, fair to the eye, and it is likely might carry a fragrancy and odoriferousness with it to the smell; and, in conjunction with the other methods of temptation, this might signify much. But, in the mean time, the cherishing and indulging sensitive appetite against the law of the mind and rational nature, could not but be a very faulty commission in this respect.

And so, altogether comes to discover the difference between paradise and heaven, the paradisiacal state and the heavenly state. There was at first, in paradise, sinlessness; thus far, there was a *posse non peccare*, a *possibility of not sinning;* but in the heavenly state a *non posse peccare, an impossibility of sinning*. This difference was soon to be understood; that is, it is now to be collected from what did soon and early appear in view. Man was not made in a state of *comprehensor*, in that which was to be his ultimate and consummate state; but in a state of probation, made a probationer, in order to some further state, which upon his approving himself he was to be introduced into. And such a defectibility, a possibility of understanding things wrong, and choosing wrong, it was most suitable to the primitive state of man. According to all that we can apprehend of the wisdom of God, there must be a state of probation, before a state of retribution; before punishment or reward, there must be an obediential state, wherein a man shall, as he acquits himself, be capable of, or liable to, the one or to the other. Nothing could be more congruous unto the perfection of that Supreme Being who was the Author of our being, than, that this should be the state of things between him and man, at the first.

And now, before we pass from this head there are sundry instructive corollaries or inferences, that we may take up from it.

1. One we have mentioned already, (as it the last time came in our way,) that is, of what concernment it is to the female sex to take heed of comporting duly with, or lest they should violate or pervert the intent of, their being made what they are; and that they, coming into the conjugal estate, should be helpers to them with whom they are conjoined in that state. "Let us make for man a help meet for him;" we see how the design of that very institution was perverted and lost at first. A help! such a help as helped to destroy him, and ruin the world with him. It was not he that was deceived; (as the apostle to Timothy notes;) that is, not first deceived, but she, a woman that God had given him. And it is not without apparent need, but most agreeable to the ducture of Scripture in this case, that such a remark as this should be made; and that they whom it concerns, should receive instructions by it; for history is full of many dreadful instances, what tragedies, feminine subtleties, and pride, and lust, and envy, and vindictiveness, hath brought about in this wretched world. But,

2. We may further learn from the whole, that it is of equal concern to that sex to which God hath given the priority, that they keep up to the law of their state; which is to be leaders and guiders in the state of marriage when they come thereinto; and that they dwell with the other relative, according to knowledge; (as the apostle Peter's expression is, 1 Pet. iii. 7,) that they comport with the obligation that the original institution hath laid upon them as to this. For we are not to think that Adam could, therefore, be excused because Eve solicited him, having offended first; no more than, afterwards, Ahab was excused for being a wicked man above all others, (upon the matter there was none like him for wickedness,) because that Jezebel his wife stirred him up, as it is, 1 Kings xxi. 25. He was not, therefore, a more innocent person; no, he was wicked, even beyond parallel, though Jezebel his wife stirred him up; for Adam ought to have done the business of his station. He that is first in such a relation, and that hath the higher dignity, ought to comport with the obligation of the law of his state, and to exercise that more confirmed judgment which is supposed did belong to him. That he did not so, this made him guilty before the Supreme Judge. "Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife;" (Gen. iii. 17.) therefore, the malediction of the doom comes upon him, which hath been so generally transmitted as we know. Again,

3. We learn, hence, that the grace of God, not as it is eminent in himself, but as it is transient, doth issue forth, and is communicated and imparted here and there, doth admit of degrees; there may be more, or there may be less given forth, according to the mere pleasure of the Free-giver. A contemplation that tends highly and justly to exalt and magnify the grace of God, and the God of all grace, in the absoluteness of that liberty which maketh it what it is, that is, "grace." It could not be grace if it were not most free. And being so, then he might dispense more, or he might dispense less, as to him seemeth good. We are not to think there was nothing of grace, nothing of dignation, nothing of vouchsafement, in God's first treatment of Adam; that he would make him such a creature, that he would give him such endowments as he did, it was all of good pleasure. But so absolute liberty, as doth belong to grace, might issue forth in higher or in lower degrees, as should seem meet to the Free-giver; he might give so much of his own influence, as by which it was intrinsically possible (as was said before) not to have sinned; while he was under no obligation to give forth so much as to make it impossible to sin. Again,

4. We may further learn, hence, that by the same steps and degrees by which man did at first depart from God, God did depart from man; forsook not but being forsaken; so that the measure which he gave long after, was at first observed strictly; (as it still is every where in the world;) God is with you while you are with him: so it ever was, so it ever will be, between him and his intelligent creatures. As the creatures goes off from him, he righteously recedes and goes from the creature. Not, that on the part of favour he puts himself under any negative tie, that is not to be thought or imagined, but he is pleased to put himself under a positive one; that is, he hath put himself under no obligation to do more than according to this rule. For that he most frequently doth; and (in the state of apostacy) without it, who could be saved? None could, if God did not draw nigh to men; or took up a thought so to do. That rule is no negative tie upon God: but he hath been pleased to put himself under a positive tie; that is, such as are in the state of grace now, God will be with them while they are with him. As to Adam, who was in a state of grace of another kind at first, God would most certainly be with him as long as he was with God. And so it is still, with any that are in a state of grace, any that God takes to be his peculiar people: "I will be with you while you are with me;" he will never do less than that. He may, many times, do more, incomparably more, unspeakably more: he may prevent, and be beforehand; or he may follow men in their wanderings, even as he did Adam himself when he was wandered and gone off. But he would never go off from Adam first; he only did go off and depart from him by such steps as by which Adam did depart from God: and not being tied to the contrary, he might do so, and for wise and holy ends did. But again,

5. We may further learn, hence, that such a liberty of will as stands in a mere indifferency to good or evil, is no perfection unalterably and immutably belonging to the nature of man: nothing can be more apparent, such a liberty as that, is most unfit to be magnified and made such an idol of as it hath by many within the Christian world. For it is plain, and nothing can be plainer, that it did not belong as a perfection, immutably, to the nature of man. It was very suitable to that less perfect state in which man was created and made. But it is not to be found agreeing to it immutably, and without variation, at any time since, or ever will again. It just served for that state wherein he was at first made, such a liberty as stood with an indifferency to good and evil, (whether that good or evil should lie in doing or not doing, or whether it should lie in doing this or doing that,) it never belonged to man, but only in that first juncture, as being very suitable to the state in which man, as a probationer, was made and set at first. But it is not found to be with man ever

since, or is ever like to be again: for in the unregenerate state, there is a liberty only unto evil, so as "all the imaginations of men's hearts are only evil, and that continually." There is no liberty as to any spiritual good, saving good. And again, even the regenerate state, though there be a liberty to good through grace, yet it is very imperfect. And then, look to the consummate state of saints in glory, and there is only liberty to good; no liberty of sinning: nay, no liberty to good or evil, (consider the matter morally,) not at all. So that so magnified an idol of liberty of will, as if it were an inseparable perfection of the nature of man, was never known to agree to it, but in its first state: and no more was ever found belonging to it since, nor ever will be.

It may be said, it is only the moral good and evil, which is superadded to the nature of man, that alters the case with him: and that doth not change his nature; but that his nature will still be the same. And it is very true, his nature is the same that at first it was; otherwise, he could not be the same creature that did offend, and comes to be punished; or that shall, by grace, be made to comply with the terms of God's gracious covenant; and that shall afterwards come to be, through grace, rewarded. He would not be the same creature, if there were a change, quite, of his nature, and the essentials of his being: man would not be man, he would be another thing. But then, as moral good superadded hereunto, the one or the other of them may be without making his nature another thing. It cannot, therefore, be said, that this liberty of will is altogether inseparable from his nature. And if, in the heavenly state, (which is most plain and evident,) confirmation in good doth nothing spoil a man's liberty, then, the efficacy of his grace in his present state doth not spoil a man's liberty neither: nay, it doth much less; for if it should be supposed to do so, then a man would be less a man for being a glorified man; it would be a diminution to the dignity of man, and he would be the worse for going to heaven; because there, his liberty ceaseth, a liberty to good or evil. What an unimaginable thing is that, that it should be a depression, a diminution, to a man, to glorify him! that that should be a maim of his nature! But if the glory of heaven do not diminish a man, or be a maim to him, because it takes away the possibility of sinning in the heavenly state; then, the efficacy of grace, in the present state, is no diminution, nor blemish, nor maim to the nature of man now neither. Again,

6. We may further learn, hence, what cause we have to apprehend and dread the destructive designs of the devil. For what! do we apprehend that he is less an enemy to God, or less an enemy to man, now, than he was at first? Do you think the devil is grown kinder, more good-natured, less intent upon the destruction of souls, and less malicious against heaven? It is a most intolerable, most inexcusable thing, that we who pretend to believe the revelation of God about these things, and do hereby know the devil to have been a "murderer from the beginning," and may collect, that he is still going about, that he may destroy and devour as a roaring lion; I say, the Lord have mercy upon us, that notwithstanding we pretend to know and believe all this, we should live so secure as we do, without any thought of any such thing. And,

7. It may give us to understand the madness of self-confidence, that we should be so little afraid of sin; that we should be so little afraid of temptation; that we should be so apt to trust our own strength: and when that perfect state wherein Adam was made in paradise, was not enough to secure him, that we should live such independent lives, so seldom look up; that we have not the sense of that petition more deeply wrought into our souls, "that we may not be led into temptation." Divers other things there are that might be hinted, but I shall only add this, for the present,

8. We may further learn, that there is no need that there should be any new invented account of the first apostacy of man, so as therein to depart from the plainness and simplicity of the letter of that history, which God hath given us of it; there is no need of any such thing. The matter, as Scripture represents it, and as we have (though less perfectly) represented it from Scripture, as it lies, is rational and congruous enough; and such as we need not be ashamed to own and avow to the world. There are those that are so over-officious in these matters, as to trouble the world with their fine notions and accounts thereof, altogether alien from the letter of the history, that so they may (as is pretended) make things look a little more plausibly than the letter of history doth represent them; when indeed, if the matter be searched into, the design seems to be, not to make them look plausible, but ridiculous: and their business is not to expound Scripture, but to expose it, and the whole of our religion. But I shall say no more to them now neither.

* Preached March 16th, 1694.

LECTURE XXIII.*

So far we have gone in our course of treating, in some order, of the several heads of religion, as to enter upon this doctrine of the apostacy, which we proposed to consider and speak to from this text, *Sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, and therein to treat of these three general heads.

I. Of the fall of the first man.

II. Of the fallen state of man. And,

III. Of the consecution of the latter of these upon the former.

And for the First of these generals, the Fall of the First Man, we proposed, therein, to consider and speak to these four more special heads: 1. The sin by which he fell; 2. The way how he fell into and by this sin; 3. The death that did ensue; and, 4. The dueness of that death upon this sin: and we have spoken to the two first of these.

3. We come now to the third, the death that did ensue as to this first man. And here the inquiry may be, whether that the death contained in the commination or threatening, be principally meant, or the death that is in other terms expressed in the consequent sentence? The first of these, you read Gen. ii. 17. and the latter you read, Gen. iii. from the 17th to the 19th ver. I say, whether the death expressed in the commination—"In the day that thou eatest thereof; thou shalt surely die," or that which is in other words expressed (not by the word death) in the sentence, "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return," be the same, yea or no; it is plain, that there is a real difference betwixt the commination (formally considered) that contains the one, and the sentence that expresses the other.

By the former, the commination or threatening, is established (as far as the comminatory sanction could go) that law or covenant of works, which was to concern all mankind. By the latter, to wit, the sentence, there was a particular application of this law, now transgressed, unto this particular case of transgressing Adam; as that is the proper business of a sentence, to apply the law according to which it must be understood to pass to the particular case of offenders, when they come to be judged by that law.

But it is here more distinctly to be considered, whether that the sentence do not carry with it some moderation as to the evil or penalty contained in the threatening of commination: in reference whereto, these particulars are worthy your consideration.

(1.) That the terms, wherein the one and the other are to be delivered, are not the same; for the terms of the commination, by which the law or covenant of works, that was to concern all mankind, is established, as by a solemn sanction, goes in these express terms: "In case thou eatest, thou shalt (as we read it) surely die:" thou shalt die the death, or, dying, thou shalt die. But the sentence hath not the word "death" in it; but it speaks of sundry miseries that should attend this life, and that should end, at length, in the dissolution of the compound, and especially, of the earthly part: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Having worn out a sad life amidst many sorrows here on earth, thou shalt go to the dust at last, as thou art dust. And,

(2.) It is to be considered, that these different terms are not apt, fully, to express the same thing: for whereas, it is said in the commination, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die the death," these are expressions very fitly accommodated to signify death in the utmost extent, in all the latitude of it, "thou shalt die the death:" all the fulness of death seems to be comprised therein without limitation. But in the sentence, when the great day comes to pass judgment upon the delinquents, (the law being now violated and broken,) you have not, in his application to either of the human offenders, any so terrible expressions as this, only they are doomed to manifest sorrows and miseries: and it is told to Adam, (in whom the woman must be comprehended as being taken out of the man,) that "dust they are, and unto dust they shall return;" therefore, there seems to be much less in the sentence than in the commination. And,

(3.) It is to be considered, that between these two, the Gospel did intervene; that is, between the commination and the sentence: the commination was given with the law to man yet innocent: when he was now fallen and had transgressed, then cometh the sentence; but it so comes as that the Gospel steps in between, being tacitly insinuated in reference to them, in what was directly said to the serpent; that which was a curse to him, was a blessing to them: "I will put enmity between seed and seed, between thy seed and the woman's seed; and that seed shall break thy head, though thou shalt bruise his heel." And this, the grace of God might, for ought we know, apply and bring home to the case of Adam, as it was applied to all the more special seed of the woman, that should come to be united with him who was most eminently the woman's seed. And therefore, it might very well be, that though all the fulness and horrors of death, taken in its utmost latitude and comprehension, were included in the commination, there might, in pronouncing the sentence upon Adam, be as great a mitigation, as the variation of the terms doth import.

But our inquiry here must be concerning the death contained in the commination, where we have the term of "death," double death, or dying the death, most expressly made use of. And it is by that, that the dying of this death is to be measured; to wit, by the commination, as it did concern Adam, and it must concern Adam's posterity. And admit that there was a real mitigation upon the intervening of the Gospel, and the exercise of the grace of God, applying it in Adam's case, yet we are still to consider the death that was contained in the commination, as due to Adam; due, to wit, in a former instance, before there could be a mitigation in a latter, in a following instance: for supposing there were then so quick and speedy a remission in so great part, yet, the penalty remitted must be due, before it could be remitted. It must be a debt, before it could be a remitted debt. And so concerning the death that was due, which offending Adam and his posterity became subject and liable to; I say, concerning that it is we have to inquire, as his dueness is measured by the commination; though indeed, we are not yet according to the series and order of discourse, to consider this death in the extensiveness of it to Adam's posterity; for that comes in, under the next general head, the fallen state of man; whereas, we have only now to consider the fall of the first man, and what did concern the case of Adam himself. And so, our inquiry is, What death it was that was threatened to him, upon the supposition that he should transgress? And of this matter, I shall give you an account in several particulars.

[1.] Most plain it is, that corporeal death was included in the meaning of the commination; for that he did actually incur. You read, in the short history that we have of him, that death, at length, finished his course. He lived so long, and he died. And it could not be, that he should incur that which was not due. And if it were due, it must be so upon the commination; as the dueness of any such punishment, upon any delinquent, is first measured by the law; the sentence is to proceed according to law; that is, so far as not to go beyond it: it is possible there may be mitigations, but the extent of the law cannot be exceeded. That is therefore plain, that corporeal death was included. And,

[2.] It is very evident too, that much more was included than corporeal death: for Adam did actually suffer more, (as is manifest) than mere corporeal death; as the labours, and hardships, and sorrows of life, and whatsoever else besides, about which we shall further inquire anon. And,

[3.] That more beyond corporeal death could not mean annihilation, or an extinction of his being. For,

First, We do not find that either he, or any one else, was ever annihilated, or that any creature ever was. No such thing appears, that either he, or any man, or any thing, was actually reduced to nothing. Nor again,

Secondly, Could death be a proper expression of annihilation, for annihilation is not adequately opposite to life. There is no adequate opposition between life and annihilation: if there were, then life and non-annihilation, or continuing such a thing in being, must be equivalent terms, if the other be adequately opposite terms. But it is plain, they are not so; because it is manifest, there are many things in being, and which are somewhat, and yet do not live. Therefore, to suppose that annihilation should be the thing meant by death, here, as is threatened to Adam, and so to offending man in him, is a dream without a pretence or ground, neither to be found, or any shadows of it, in Scripture; nor at all agreeing to the reason of the thing.

To reduce a thing to nothing, is no apt kind of punishment. There is no other thing, indeed, but a reasonable creature, that is capable of punishment, properly so called. But the reduction of any thing to nothing, is to put it absolutely out of any capacity of apprehending itself under divine displeasure; or, that it is self-fallen, under the animadversion of justice: and therefore, is a most unsuitable thing to be designed for the punishment of a reasonable creature, if it were to be called a creature. But the very notion is most unsuitable to it. And therefore,

[4.] There is no doubt, but spiritual death is included. "Thou shalt surely die," thou shalt die the death: here must be included spiritual death; the death of the soul: not naturally understood, but morally; for naturally, the soul is immortal, and can never die. But death, in reference to the soul, being taken morally, that is, as inclusive both of sin and misery, so the soul is liable to death, and became no doubt the subject of it, in this very case, antecedently to the restitution, and recovery, and the actual supervention of the divine grace. And when we say that death, in this sense, that is, the moral sense, doth include both sin and misery, it must do so, even by the same reason, by which life, in the moral sense, doth include both sanctity and felicity. And it is manifest, it doth include both.

But then, we must further know, that sin being included in this death, it must be in a two-fold notion, which we must understand in our minds concerning sin; that is, sin is to be considered, either as it is an evil against God; or it is to be considered, also, as an evil to ourselves. As an evil against God, so it could be a wrong to him, though it cannot be a hurt. And in that sense, or according to that notion, we are not to take sin here, for so we considered it under the former head. Very true it is, we must add,

[5.] That there is a necessary complication of sin and misery with one another, as there is of sanctity and felicity with one another: they are complicated, and cannot but be so, even in their own natures. But though they cannot be severed, they may be considered distinctly. Severed they cannot be, neither of these two pairs—neither sin and misery, nor holiness and blessedness. Neither of the pairs can be disjoined or severed: the love of God, that comprehends in it all our duty, and all our felicity, virtually, as being the great active principle, and the great fruitive; that principle, from whence I am to do all the good I do; and that principle by which I am to enjoy all the good that I enjoy, or am capable of enjoying. Both of these two things, summed up together in one virtual principle of love, can never be disjoined or severed, any more than a thing can be torn and severed from itself. And so the case is, as to the opposite pair; sin and misery, they can never be disjoined or severed, for they are virtually comprehended in one and the same principle; to wit, enmity to God; upon the account whereof, while it prevails, it is impossible either to obey God or enjoy him. These two, therefore, cannot but be inseparable. But while they are inseparable, yet they are distinct too. As to this latter pair, wherein we are now concerned, to wit, sin and misery; "To be carnally

minded is death." And as it is misery, and so a hurt and ruin to us, so it is to be considered here as it comes under the notion of the threatened death, and so doth make a part of the threatened penalty; that is, sin carrying a self-punitive malignancy in it. God having been once offended, he leaves the sinner (till grace doth work the reparation) under the self-punishment. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee." And so, in this sense it is that spiritual death must comprehend in that death contained in the commination: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die the death." It must comprehend spiritual death; and that spiritual death doth also comprehend in it several things, of which I shall give you a very brief account. As,

First, The retraction of God's Spirit. That it contains, as the first and most fundamental thing, in this threatened spiritual death, the retraction of God's Spirit. When Adam had abused, or not duly used, the power which his Creator gave him, of obeying and complying with the divine pleasure, the Spirit retired; and now, we must consider the difference (as hath been intimated before) between the spiritual influence which was vouchsafed to Adam, while he yet remained innocent, and that which is afforded to the regenerate, in their present state, to preserve that state; that is, as to Adam in innocence, that influence was enabling, but not determining. It was such as by which (as hath been told you) he had a possibility of not falling, but not an impossibility of falling; he had a possibility of standing, not an impossibility not to stand; that he had not that influence of the Spirit which he had, being suitable to his state of probation wherein he was made, that is now justly withheld, the Spirit retires, leaves him to himself.

This we do not say *gratis dictum;* for do but consider that plain text, (Gal. iii. 13.) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us Gentiles, the promise of the Spirit (or the promised Spirit) through faith." If the remission of the curse do carry with it the conferring of the grace of the Spirit, then the curse, while it did continue, could not but include, carry in it, the privation and suspension of the Spirit. This was part of the curse upon apostate Adam, the loss of God's Spirit. For that which the grace of Christ and redemption by him, removing, inferred the communication of the Spirit, that must include the suspension and withholding of the Spirit. And,

Secondly, Hereupon, it could not but ensue, (which is a further thing contained in this spiritual death,) that the holy image of God must be erased, vanished; and, antecedently to the restitution, it could not but be so. And,

Thirdly, There must be included in this spiritual death, an aversion from God, the turning off of the apostate soul from God: that whereas it minded him before, with a complacential adoration, now it is quite alienated; here is no inclination in him towards God. The thing speaks itself; and it was apparent in Adam's case. As soon as he becomes guilty, he hides himself, vainly attempts to hide himself from the doom. That which was before the most grateful thing of all things, to have God nigh him, is now quite otherwise; he cannot endure that God should approach him. If it were possible to keep himself from God, (but that he vainly attempts,) his sense would be, "Let me have no more to do with God." And,

Fourthly, There must be further contained in it, hereupon, a cessation of that intercourse and communion that was between God and him. For the Spirit of God was retired on his part, and man was become averse and disaffected to God on his own part. The image of God that rendered him propense towards God, and meet for his communion, being vanished and gone, nothing can ensue more necessarily and certainly than a cessation of communion: God refuseth to converse with him, and he refuseth to converse with God. And,

Fifthly, There could not also but be included as consequent hereupon, regrets of conscience: not penitential but tormenting; not penitential as yet, or not penitential first; but first tormenting, before they could be penitential, while grace was not yet applied. How soon it might be we know not. It is very likely it might be very soon, by the account that short history gives us. But in the mean time, there could be only tormenting regrets of conscience: "Very lately I was an innocent creature; now I am a fallen creature: I then stood right in the acceptance and favour of God; now there is war between him and me." Penitential regrets, indeed, could not be a part of the penalty; they are a part and degree of the sinner's restoration and recovery; but the preceding tormenting regrets, they are included in the death. It is a deadly thing to be stung with the sense of the one's having offended him whom we can never propitiate to ourselves again. And hereupon, also,

Sixthly, Very black and gloomy thoughts must ensue; amazing thoughts! He that was in the eye of the innocent, unoffending soul, his highest delight, now he is all inwrapt in a cloud; or the mind is inwrapt in a cloud, that it cannot behold him; such a cloud as it can by no means penetrate. God could be conceived of under no other notion than that of an enemy and avenger. And,

Seventhly, There must be, hereupon, most astonishing fears; for it is obvious that a reasonable, intelligent mind would consider, "He who did so lately fetch me and all this creation out of nothing, is almighty, and it is impossible for me to fence against his power. That power that could create a world so easily, what can I do to protect myself against it, when it is set on work by just displeasure?" And then,

Eighthly. It must include despair: for the first covenant gave no hope of forgiveness, and therefore, gave no room or place for repentance till grace came, till an inspired Gospel came to be actually applied and brought home in this case. And therefore, there must be the epitome and sum of hell, in the state of this case; God offended and never to be reconciled, and against whose displeasure, armed with power, I can have no defence, no protection. All this more, all this surplusage, must be contained in this death; that is, spiritual death, the present death of the soul in the moral sense, in all this latitude and extensiveness of it. And then, further,

[6.] There is in this surplusage, too, these many external miseries of life that we find to be contained, also, in the very sentence; for though the sentence may contain less than the commination, yet it could not contain more. Therefore, all these being found in the sentence, must be in the commination too; all the external miseries of life that a delinquent creature could be liable to. And then, in the last place,

[7.] This death must carry in it, too, death eternal, as the sum of the penalty, or the consummation thereof, as the evil threatened and contained in that. And though many would speak very distinguishingly of this matter, and labour to do so when they can, yet let but plain Scripture be considered in the case, and you will see how it speaks. Do but follow this very context unto the shutting up of this chapter, and you will see what kind of reign it is that sin hath in the world. It now began its reign even in this first apostacy, or in the apostacy of the first man. Sin, we are told, it reigns unto death, verse 21. "As sin hath reigned unto death, so grace might reign through righteousness unto life." What life? "Unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." You see how these two stand in their antithesis, in their opposition to one another. Here is death set in opposition to eternal life. What death is that that stands in opposition to eternal life? Surely, it must be eternal death. So in the conclusion of the next chapter; "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "The wages of sin is death." It is not said of this or that sin, some greater sin; but "The wages of sin," as sin, "is death." And what death the opposition shows us; it is put in opposition to eternal life; therefore, it must be eternal death that is the wages of sin, of sin as sin; and therefore, if Adam's transgression was sin, such a death must be the wages of it.

And that is the *third* particular, belonging to this first general head that we were to treat of, to wit, to show what the death was that did ensue, and was designed to ensue, by force of the divine law; or the commination added thereto, upon this first sin of the first man. Now,

4. The fourth of these heads is the dueness of this death upon this sin; and upon that I shall not insist, it being enough to touch it, things being obvious of themselves.

The heinousness of the sin, and the too naturalness of the punishment taken together, will evince the dueness of this event upon this sin.

(1.) Consider the heinousness of the sin. We have opened that unto you in many particulars formerly, to which I shall only add the consideration of these four circumstances. As that,

[1.] The first man should so soon transgress. But just now made; (upon the matter it being generally thought to be but a little time; most think the same day;) just now made by God, a reasonable, immortal creature, and so soon made by himself, a sinner, transgressor, and a rebel.

[2.] Consider that he sinned with open eyes, having, before, no cloud upon his mind, but all things in clear light before him.

[3.] And while his nature was antecedently untainted, no vicious inclination in him. And,

[4.] That there was nothing which could be matter of complaint in his state, his condition so entirely good, and yet did not please him. Think, I say, of the heinousness of the sin, in these and other respects, and then the incurred death cannot be thought unproportionable, or undue, though you take it in the extent that hath been mentioned. But,

(2.) Consider, too, the con-naturalness of the punishment to the sin, this death to his transgression. He turns from God to the creature; God turns away (in just displeasure, upon being offended) from him. Hence, all these things ensue and follow of themselves. And there was no preventing it by any ordinary methods, unless God would annihilate him, unless he would throw his creature back again into nothing. But that became not the wisdom and greatness of God to do. It had been too much trifling to raise his creature into being, and put him under such an equitable and so righteous a law, and, he offending, presently to nullify his own work. That had not been becoming God, not suitable to the divine wisdom and greatness.

And therefore, now to give some brief notes of *Use* upon the two last mentioned heads.

1. You may learn, hence, that the act of eating the forbidden fruit, is not to be considered too abstractly, as the first sin of man; that is the thing wherein the most do foolishly impose upon themselves, and so speak and think diminishingly of this whole matter. What! was it so great a matter? was it so great a thing to eat the fruit of a tree that was forbidden? This, abstractly considered, was not the first sin. Not abstractly considered; take it comprehensively, and take it in all that was belonging to it, and it was the first sin. But the act of eating alone, considered by itself, was not the first; there were a great many mental evils (as we have shown in opening the sin) which did precede the act of eating, and that altogether make it a most horrid wickedness; distrust of the truth of God's word, and trusting a creature that he might easily apprehend to be an apostate, fallen creature, by opposing the word of God; trusting him against him that made him, and gave him breath. He trusted against God, one, he knew not whom; but he might suppose it one that was not in his original integrity, that was fallen and gone off from God; otherwise he could never have counselled against God. There was great ingratitude for goodness shown and exhibited; for mercy received: mercy, indeed, as yet it could not properly be called, he not being as yet a miserable creature, or in a miserable state. There was opposing his will to the supreme will. There was exalting the sensitive nature against the rational, against the law of the mind: and so confounding the order of things, in that part of God's creation; to wit, himself breaking the order and dependance of the faculties in reference to one another, with many more.

2. And you may further learn, hence, how nearly sin and misery, sin and death, do border upon one another. They are things very near to each other. These two spheres of life and death; that lightsome, glorious sphere, all full of vitality, pleasure, and bliss, and that sphere of darkness and death, that comprehended every thing of horror in it, you see how nearly they do touch, and how nearly they did touch; so that we might suppose but even a moment between one and the other. This moment, an innocent creature, standing in delight, and favour, and acceptance; and the next moment, an accomplice of hell, associated with apostate spirits against God. How nearly do the spheres of light, and life, and bliss; and of death, and horror, and hell, touch! How near did they touch one another! How immediate was the *transitus*, the passage from the one to the other! And,

3. You see, not only the nearness in point of time, but the natural connexion that is between sin and misery; that the one doth in so great a measure involve the other, as I have shown they do. Sin carries death in it; "To be carnally minded is death." And we may further see,

4. What occasion we should take hence, to admire the grace of the Gospel, that it should so soon intervene; and when it so doth, here is place for repentance by the constitution of a new covenant, the evangelical one, which the covenant and law of works could not give upon any terms; for it could represent God no otherwise than an unappeasable enemy. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them."

LECTURE XXIV.*

Rom. v. 12.

And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

FROM the former part of this scripture, we have insisted upon the fall of the first man; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" his fall, by sin, into death. And so you have seen the entrance of both these, sin and death, into the world, in the fall of that one man. Now we come in the next place:

II. To speak, from the latter words, of the fallen state of man, generally considered. And you see the ground of that, too, lies as fully in the latter words of the text, that "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." I read the words according to our translation, though some would have them to be otherwise read, and the letter of the text doth admit of another reading; instead of "for that" they read "in whom," all have sinned. But of that there will be more occasion to speak hereafter.

In the mean while we are to consider the fallen state of men in general, according as these expressions do represent and hold forth to us. And they do represent his state to be a state of sin and death; these two complicated with one another. "Death hath passed upon all, for that all have sinned." And, according to that reading of the words, and the nature of the thing, that which is here last mentioned, requires to be considered first, though these are complicated with one another; sin and death run into one another, are most inseparably conjunct; yet, they are all some way distinct. And so far as they do admit of being distinguished, we shall consider and speak to them distinctly. And so,

1. Of the sinful state of men in general. Now, in speaking to this, as the letter of the text leads us, we shall —consider the nature, and—the universality, chiefly, of this sin that is thus spread through the world. We are,

(1.) To consider the nature of it. The general nature of sin is plainly expressed, 1 John iii. 4. "Sin is the transgression of the law." And therefore, that we may show you more distinctly the nature of that sin which hath so generally diffused itself among men, (as we shall afterwards show,) it will be needful to inquire, What it is that we must take for the measure of such sin? inasmuch as the following words here do plainly tell us, in the latter part of the 13th verse, that "sin is not imputed where there is no law:" wherever any sin is, some law must be supposed to be. And what is that law, against which it can be understood that men might so generally sin?

You have heard, by what law the first sin of man was to be measured: that was partly a positive law, a partien-

* Preached March 17th, 1694.

lar precept, a law made by a spiritual revelation to him: but much more principally a natural law, which was violated in the violation of that positive one, inasmuch as that positive law had its immediate root and foundation in the natural one: nothing being more apparently natural, than that the reasonable creature ought to comply with the will of his Maker being once known. But though it were very apparent what law that first sin did transgress, yet it is not so apparent what law it is that the common sin of mankind doth now transgress. And so that needs to be inquired into.

In the general, it may be said, that the law that doth obtain in the world now, and from age to age, doth consist of two parts, as the law at first did which was given to Adam, even in his innocency; to wit, that it is partly natural, and partly by superadded revelation. So it was at first, so it is still; but with great and remarkable difference. That whereas, at first, the natural law was full, perfect, entire, most comprehensive, and large, even in the discernible impressions of it; and the superadded law by special revelation narrow, lying in a very little compass (one particular interdict only with its penalty establishing it) that we read or are informed of. But now the case is very diverse and opposite: that is, the natural is diminished, not in the obligation of it, but in the impression, the discernible or discerned impression, that frame in the heart or mind of man broken into fragments, many parts very obscure and illegible, and divers, with many of the inhabitants of this earth, (as it were,) lost through inadvertency, and their not reflecting upon themselves so as to discern and find out the sculpture of what remains engraven upon their hearts. And the revealed law, (where that obtains,) that is so much the more large, and comprehensive, and full, and perfect, so as to discover every false way; and every true and right way; one and the same rule being the same measure, *recti et obliqui*, of that which is right and that which is wrong too.

And the exigency of the case did require that it should be so: that is, by how much the more that the natural law was erased, broken into fragments and parcels, and many of them (as to their discernibleness) lost with many; so much the more requisite was it, that the superadded law (which was to be by revelation) should be entire and complete, that there should be another impression of that original law, that should collect and gather up all that was lost of it, and rendered it obscure, from the prevailing corruption of the world. And so thus, in short, did these two cases stand in opposition to one another. At first, the natural law was most entire and full, and large and comprehensive; and the revealed law narrow, and lying within a very little compass. But now the natural law, to wit, in the discernibleness of its impression, is greatly diminished; and the law that is by revelation so much the more large, comprehensive, entire, and full.

At first, that revealed law after the apostacy, must, for several successive ages, be easily transmitted (by reason of the great longevity that remained before and after the flood) from hand to hand by a certain tradition. But afterwards, God provided that it should be collected and gathered up into sacred records, though not all written at once, but successively, according as supreme wisdom had determined concerning the different states in the future church, in point of light. And so, what we have of it now, lies entirely and fully in the sacred volumes, of which we have discoursed to you largely heretofore; but that doth actually obtain but in a small part of the world in comparison; but a very small part. That it doth obtain no further, is owing to the wickedness of the world itself, which obstructs the diffusion of it. God, in his holy wisdom, not obtruding, not by extraordinary means and methods making way for it, as it were easy for him to do, if it were so agreeable to the counsel of his own wisdom, the results whereof we now see, in fact; and the reasons whereof may be better understood in the appointed season. But we are not to think this wicked world innocent in its having no more of revealed light than it hath; that light shines in darkness, but the darkness doth not comprehend it, strives against it, otherwise there must have been a diffusion, even of most evangelical knowledge many an age ago. Men fence against it and keep it off, and will not let it spread; and God doth not exert the greatness of his power as yet (for ends and purposes best known to himself) for the gaining of a victory over that contumacious darkness.

Yet, in the mean time, where there are no notices of that revealed law, or that law by revelation, we are not to think that the world is without law: do but observe to this purpose what follows the text, "Until the law (verse 13.) sin was in the world;" until the law. Until what law? It is certain, here, "law" must be taken in a restrained and limited sense, otherwise the expressions in the following part of that verse would contradict those in the former: "Sin is not imputed where there is no law:" then there could have been no such thing as sin, from Adam to Moses, if there had been no law at all in all that interval. When therefore it is said, "Until the law sin was in the world;" that is, until the written law, or until the law that was given on Mount Sinai; it is not the law simply, but respectively only, that is there meant; not in an absolute and general, but in a particular and limited sense.

It is true, there was a time (that time that is there mentioned, from Adam to Moses) when there was no such law as came afterwards to be in the time of Moses. Not that there was then no law at all; for then there could be no sin; but it is expressly told us, that "sin was in the world" for all that time; and therefore, there was some law; there was a law by which men might be reckoned sinners: for there was such a law according to which they were punished, as the following words show; "Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses;" there was such a law as made men still liable to death; and therefore, such a law against which men might still sin, even in the long interval from Adam to Moses. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."

I pray consider that expression, "that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." How was that? That is, that did not sin against a particular and express law, with its annexed sanction, as Adam did. Some would understand that of infants; and, it is true, it must include them. But I see no cause at all for such a restriction; but most manifestly the contrary: for infants were not the only ones that did die; death reigned over all, in that interval from Adam to Moses; and so, the sin must be as general as the death. But herein was the great dissimilitude, that, whereas Adam did sin against a framed, express precept, with its annexed penalty in the commination, the generality of men from Adam to Moses did not so sin; but they sinned against such a law as they had; that is, the relics and fragments of the law of nature, first impressed upon the heart of man, or put into his very nature.

This is agreeable to what we have in this same epistle, chap. ii. 12. "As many as have sinned without the law," (that is, without a written law,) "shall perish without law;" to wit, without that written law. Some law or other they were still under; they must be supposed to sin against some law; otherwise they could perish by none. But a written law they had not. "As they that are under the law, (as it there follows,) they are to be judged by the law." And afterwards, in the 14th and 15th verses of the same chapter; "When the Gentiles who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, they are a law unto themselves, which show the works of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts in the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." So we read it, and I think very defectively, "accusing and excusing:" it is in the Greek, "by turns;" not "one another;" but, "sometimes accusing, and sometimes excusing." Not as if their thoughts did accuse one another, or excuse one another; but the expression may admit to be read, I say, "sometimes accusing, and sometimes excusing," according to the discernible evidence of the case.

And so you may now easily collect, how, in this general sinful state of the apostate world, men do every where transgress against a law. Those that have a written law, or might more easily have it, they sin against that; to wit, the revelation that God hath given of his own mind concerning their duty, and in order to their felicity. They that have it, or might more easily have it, I say, sin against it. They that have it not, or from whom it lies more remote,

they yet sin against the dictates of the law which they have in themselves, or which they are to themselves. They that have no other law, being a law to themselves, they having some measures, though broken and imperfect ones, of right and wrong in their own minds and natural consciences.

And now, the measure being stated by which this general sinfulness of the world is to be estimated, the natural law, and, generally, that law that is by revelation in the word of God, so far as it doth obtain, or might more easily obtain; it will be our further business, in the next place, to open to you the sinfulness of men in reference to this law, of which you have this account. And it is, in the general, the sinfulness of their inclination, or of their nature, that we are obliged, by the design of our present subject, to consider and speak to: "For that all have sinned."

Here is not, it is true, actual sin: that the expression doth literally signify. But that must be understood as supposing a sinful nature, which is more principally to be considered; or it is to be considered in the first place; that which is the *peccatum peccans*, as it is significantly enough called by some. That evil heart, that nature, not as it is nature, but as it is depraved, it is now transmitted every where from age to age, and from generation to generation, among men: the fountain from whence all those streams of wickedness flow that have deluged the world, and made a raging ocean, "the waves whereof continually cast forth mire and dirt," as the prophet expresseth it, Isa. lvii. 20. That nature of man, which as it is degenerate and corrupt, is become a seminary, a seed-plot of all kinds of wickedness.

This is for *peccatum originale originatum;* as we formerly discoursed to you of the *peccatum originale originans*, as some do choose to express those things. It is, in the general, a sinful inclination which lies opposite to the law of God, natural or revealed: for we are not to suppose that the love of God doth only provide against sinful acts, or sinful omissions; no, this is the very peculiar excellency of the divine government, in contradistinction to any other; that it determines first, what men ought to be, and then, consequently and dependently, what they ought to do. Human laws and governments do not respect the former of these, otherwise than consequentially. They only take notice of actions, and those, external ones too. But internal inclinations they make little provision about, and do not otherwise take notice of (as indeed the nature of the thing doth not admit they should) but by consequence, as a man's habit and internal inclination may be collected and gathered from the series and course of his actions. But it is quite contrary as to the divine government, and the laws that belong thereunto; that is, that God having an immediate inspection into the minds of men, and his government laying its first obligation there, its laws do first provide what men should be, and then, consequentially, what they should do. They should be so and so; be holy, be righteous; and then, all is to correspond hereunto.

Therefore, we must understand that an evil inclination, or a depraved or corrupted nature, is that which doth first violate the law of God, lies first against it: and so, that it is not infelicity only, to be ill inclined, but it is sin—sin in the highest and most eminent sense thereof. It is the habitual frame and bent of the soul, that the law of God doth in the first place direct; and then, it doth direct that men should act correspondently thereunto. So that now that empoisoned nature of man, the malignity of the heart and soul, or inner man, is that which makes the first and principal breach upon the law of God, which is in its own nature holy, just, and good: whatsoever there is of this law left, it is all holy, just, and good, even as it doth obtain to be called "the law of nature." What is truly such, is holy, just, and good, still, as much as ever it was, and as expressive of the mind of God.

Now concerning that corrupt inclination in the minds and souls of men, that doth first violate the law, it is to be understood agreeably to the law itself. The law itself is partly preceptive and partly prohibitive. It consists of these two parts. And these two things are accordingly to be considered in the corrupted state of human nature: to wit, first, that there is a disinclination to all that is truly good; and, secondly, that there is a propensity, a perverse inclination, to all that is sinful and wicked.

[1.] The first of these, that is, which is signified by the want of original righteousness, that rectitude which did first belong to the nature of man, the absence, and not the mere absence, but the want and privation, of that, is the first thing we have to consider in the corruption of man's nature; that now it wants the inclination that there ought to be in it according to its primitive state, and the first obligation of the divine law upon man. This is the loss of God's image; not by his taking it away, which we must carefully abstain from thinking even so much as one thought to that purpose; that is, that God took away his image from man, to wit, his image in respect whereof man was to resemble him in point of holiness; that would be to devolve the sinfulness of man's nature upon God himself. But God did righteously, upon the first apostacy, withhold his Spirit, whereupon his image, being a created thing, and not capable of self-subsistence, must vanish; and so, as that in effect to erase the holy image of God out of his soul. He (man) hath expunged and blotted it out; provoked the Spirit of God to retire; cherished and indulged corrupt inclinations against it, and in opposition to it. And, God finally still retiring, that image falleth and vanisheth; not being withdrawn by him, (speaking of the effect,) but being expelled; not withdrawn, but drawn away; not by violence (as it were) obliterated out of the soul. That which was, indeed, God's workmanship at first, is defaced by our wicked workmanship: the work of our hands hath so far destroyed the work of his.

There is, therefore, in the corrupt nature of man, a disinclination to all that which it ought to be inclined to; that is, both the objects and acts that it ought to be inclined to. We are principally to consider the objects; the acts will of course most obviously ensue. The objects wherewith man was to have to do, were God himself, his fellow-creatures, (those especially of his own order,) and himself.

There was, upon God's having made man, the direct relation first between Creator and creature; and then, hereupon, (there being divers such of the same order,) there follows, of course, a collateral relation between one such creature and another. In the first respect, man being a reasonable creature by his nature, a creature and a reasonable one, he comes under obligation to God most directly; and then, collaterally, (from God still,) he comes to be under obligation to his fellow-creatures of his own order; and inasmuch as he is capable of bearing a relation to himself, so he comes to owe duty to himself also.

To God in the first place. There is an aversion from God, to be considered in this fallen state of man, not of one single faculty of the soul alone, but even of the whole soul, and of all the faculties of it. But according to the natural order wherein they lie towards one another, the whole soul is gone off from God; mind, and will, and affections, and executive powers, altogether turned off from God. So is the account given of the fallen state of man in that 14th and 53d Psalm, from which texts, and from others, you have so many quotations taken in the 3d chapter of his epistle to the Romans, all summed in this, that "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." This, then, is the great thing that, in the first place, is held forth in this text; to wit, that the state of man is a state of apostacy and recess from God; he hath withdrawn himself, and stands now in his whole soul in a quite averse posture from God, towards whom he was originally and naturally most propense.

But then, whereas God, the Object of this aversion, is to be considered two ways, as our Supreme and Sovereign Lord, and as our Supreme and Sovereign Good, the soul of man is averse to him under both these notions; refuseth to take him as his Supreme Lord, or for his Supreme Good; that is, it will neither obey him, nor be happy in him. And whereas, under this two-fold notion, we are to consider God the object of this aversion, it is under the former of these notions that we are to consider it now, while we are speaking of the sinful state of man, or the sin of man. It will be under the latter of these notions that we are to consider it, when we speak of the death that hath passed over all men, as that whereunto it doth more peculiarly and properly belong.

But consider God as the Supreme Lord, and the sinfulness of man's nature, in this respect, lies in this that he is

under this notion, averse to, and turned off from, him, and declines obedience to him. And the whole is, under this notion, averse; that is, the mind is averse, not only doth not know him, but declines knowing him; labours under not a mere nescience of God, but an affected and chosen ignorance; desires not to know him. So is the representation made to us of the opposite state and condition of man in those mentioned Psalms, the 53d, most fully, 2, 3 verses; that is, "That God looking down from heaven upon the children of men to see who would inquire, who would seek after God, he finds them all gone back;" (the Hebrew word signifies a perverse retrocision, waywardly gone back;) no, here is no inclination to inquire after God; according to that, Job xxi. 14. "They say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," of thy concerns, and of thy methods. Those ways of intercourse that thou wouldst have to be between thee and us, these ways of thine we do not desire to know; we do not desire there should be any intermeddling, any intercourse between thee and us. And according to that Rom. i. 28. "They liked not to retain God in their knowledge." They did not only or barely not know him, but disliked to know, refused to know him. "Through deceit they refused to know me," saith the Lord, Jer. ix. 6. The same corrupt nature remaining, even under a professed relation to him, with the generality of that wicked people.

And so, in this respect, the state of man is a state of darkness; to wit, of affected darkness. "There is no darkness of shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves." It speaks the inclination of men's minds that they would fain hide themselves in some darkness or shadow of death if they could; but they can find none, none that hides them from him, though they can easily so inwrap themselves in darkness, as not to behold him. Their darkness is a fence against themselves; but not against him. They make it so thick that they cannot penetrate it; but he most easily can. They would fain have such a darkness as that he might not see them; but there is none, they cannot find any; "There is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves." But, in the mean time, that speaks the inclinations of their minds; "Oh! that we could be hid from God, and that there might be nothing at all to do between him and us." "Ye were darkness," (here is the common state of the unconverted, unregenerate world,) Ephes. v. 8. "Ye were darkness," not merely in the dark, but darkness itself. "The light that is in them is darkness," as our Saviour speaks, Mat. vi. 23. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." This, I say, speaks an aversion of mind from God; they care not to know him; they desire not to know him.

And hereupon it becomes so unaccustomed a thing to think of him. Thence is the character of a wicked, unregenerate man, "A forgetter of God." It is his usual paraphrase in Scripture, "A wicked man;" and that lies, as such, under doom, is under such a character as this, one that is "a forgetter of God;" "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," Psalm ix. And in opposition hereunto, a regenerate man, a holy man, a renewed man, is characterized by one that remembers God, that thinks of God; "A book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name." Whereas, it is said of the wicked man, "God is not in all his thoughts." Compare these two places together, Psalm x. 4. Mal. iii. 16. A good man is such a one as thinks much of the name of God, hath God's name impressed on his mind; so as every actual thought of God, it is only reading the letters that do (as it were) compose that name, and that are impressed on his own mind; to wit, his actual thinking of God. Now a book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and thought of his name. As if it had been said; "Well, is there so much kindness towards me yet to be found in this revolted world, that they will remember me? I will have a book of remembrance for them; there shall be remembrance for remembrance. Do they think of me? I will think of them too; have they kind thoughts of me? I will have much kinder thoughts of them; I will book it up. Every kind thought that is taken up concerning me, in this general apostacy and revoltedness of the world from me, I will set it down, I will have a book of remembrance for every one that has any thoughts of me, in this forlorn state of things."

And then, as this aversion hath place in the minds of men, it hath so, more formally, in their wills; they will not have this Lord to be their God; he shall not reign over them; they refuse his empire, throw off the reins; "Let us cast away his cords, and break his bands off from us." So, in the apostate world, do the princes and people combine together against the divine government; and those that lead others consent to be led themselves in this case. "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us;" (Psalm ii.) those of God, and of his Anointed, the Redeemer, the Messiah, as that word signifies.

And then, likewise, there is a consequent averse or transverse posture in the affections of the soul, whereof, indeed, the will is the seat and subject; desires, fears, hopes, delights, anger, sorrow, all transversed in a quite contrary course and being to what they should be; and so it is proportionably towards men, so far as men are concerned with men; and so it is towards ourselves. We should have discoursed of these distinctly, but cannot now.

It is, in the mean time, strange, (and let us consider that with ourselves,) that this being so apparently the common case, it should be so little considered; that men take such complacency in themselves; that it comes so seldom into the thoughts of any to think, "I either am, or have been, an apostate creature, quite turned off from God." It is to be admired, that men's own thoughts are not painful to them upon this account. Certain it is, that I, and the rest of the world, have been all in an apostacy from God. This hath been my state; it is my present state. I am either an apostate creature, or a returned creature: either still apostate, or renewed towards him, altered in my habitual frame and inclination. How is it with me? am I one of the *reduces?* one that the mighty hand and power of the Redeemer (he that died, "the just for the unjust to bring us to God") hath reduced and fetched back to God.

Or is this the case of none of us? That whereas we were all off from God, in an averse posture to him, are we not striving against the design of the merciful Redeemer, who is still striving to bring us back, and who strove herein unto blood, resisting against the wicked inclinations of degenerate, apostate men? "He resisted to blood striving against sin." That is the thing plainly implied in that of the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. xii. 4. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin;" whereas, he had been, immediately before, bespeaking them to "run with patience the race that was set before them, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of the faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." But why did he endure that cross and shame which we find him to have despised? The following words show, he had been striving against sin. But that is none of your case; it was his. He suffered that cross, and fell under all that opprobrium, ignominy, and shame, in this striving against sin even unto blood; that sin by which men are held off from God, continued in a state of apostacy from him.

Now let us bethink ourselves what the Son of God hath been striving unto blood against; to wit, "sin;" which hath turned us off from God, and kept us off from God: and are we striving against him, will not be reduced, will not be brought back? Strangers to God we have been, and so we will be still; go from day to day, from morning to night, and will have no concern with God; we will not pray to him; we will not think of his name; we will entertain no converse with him.

But the further *Use* is referred to be spoken to, after a further explication of the sinful state of mankind.

LECTURE XXV.*

IT hath been showed, that the ill inclination of men towards God, effects the whole soul. The mind knows him

* Preached March 24th 1694.

not, thinks not of him, is habitually forgetful of him; and, more formally, this aversion is in the will: that doth not choose the Lord for his God; wills him not, even where a people do profess his name. If yet the work of renovation have not taken place, his own Israel will have none of him: "Israel," saith God, "would have none of me." Corrupt nature is the same, even in such a people, whatsoever the external profession, and garb, and appearance, and show, may be. A corrupt heart is still the same thing, indisposed, disaffected to God; "alienated from the life of God." And conscience is stupified, doth not do its office, or, sometimes, is outrageous and over-does it, the affections and passions are all as so many furies; original rectitude being gone, and the soul destitute of that holy image which originally it bore.

But there is, also, an evil inclination towards fellow-creatures of their own order. That love is wanting which is "the fulfilling of the law;" and that sums up all that rectitude of heart and soul towards fellow-creatures of our own order. All is summed up in this; "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and therefore is love the fulfilling of the law.

And then, also, towards ourselves. Our love to our neighbour is to be measured by that to ourselves; as that great fundamental precept which our Saviour calls the "second," next to that; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy might; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" in opposition whereunto, stands that aversion to God, in the first part. And as to the second great commandment, it is a measured thing; and the measure is love to ourselves.

But now, in this state of apostacy, men want even that, they do not love themselves: to wit, if they did know themselves; and that they do not affect, to gain a true knowledge of themselves; and therefore, do not love themselves, their more noble self, their more excellent self. The soul, which is the man, that they do not love; they care not for it; care not how they prostitute it; how they enslave, how they hazard it from day to day. Yea, and,

[2.] In all these respects, there is not only an aversion, an ill inclination, to that which is good, a want of original righteousness, or of the holy image of God as such; but there is, likewise, propensions to all manner of evil; there are violent propensions towards forbidden objects. God being forsaken and left, and the soul of man being conscious to itself that it is not enough for itself, it must adjoin itself to somewhat else, when it is off from God: and so, by the same steps by which it recedes from him, it turns to the creature, to this vain and impure world, which is God's rival and competitor for the minds and hearts of men.

But here, it is to be considered, that when the soul is off from God, and therefore must seek for somewhat else to supply his room, it finds itself under a necessity to make a false and adscititious deity, a divided thing, as if it were under a secret consciousness that no one thing could fill up the room of God. And therefore, the new deity is divided between these two; to wit, between this world and a man's own self; that is, his meaner or baser self, his ignoble self. And all of you know (if you recollect a little) what God is to be to us, namely, our Sovereign Lord, our Sovereign Good; him we are to serve, and him we are to enjoy.

The soul being off from him, and being now to fill up his room as it can, it doth (as it can) attempt to fill it up by these two things—self and the world: self supplies the room of God, as he is to be served by us; and the world supplies the room of God, as God is to be enjoyed by us. And here are the propensions, now, of the apostate soul, continuing so, and yet unrenewed towards self, as the only one to be served, obeyed, and pleased, instead of serving, obeying, and pleasing God. And this is one of the greatest idols that is set up in the apostate world, even—a man's self.

But then remember it is his baser, meaner, and more ignoble self; when it is become the vilest thing that it was possible a reasonable, immortal soul could become; when it is besotted, carnalized, brutified; when it is, in short, become a brute, when it would be a god. While it was itself, it must abhor any such thought, with the highest measures and greatest pitch of indignation. But now it is brutified into the vilest and most degenerate thing, become even as the beast that perish, now it must be a god. "I will have none to serve but this self."

But then, finding (as that is obvious to every one) that it hath not its own good in its own hand, (as, alas! what have I in me to make me happier; and though that is more to be considered under the other head of death, yet there is sin in it too, as it underwent a direct interdict,) it finds it must forage, it must go abroad; it finds it hath not enough in itself to satisfy it. And therefore, now in this kind, and under this notion, the world is the other idol that is to supply the room of God. "Love not the world, nor the things of the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." That shows, however, in the unrenewed state, the propensions of the soul are, by love, carried towards this vain and wretched world. All the good that it designs for itself it seeks from it. And so, these are the two idols that are set up in this apostate world against the living and true God; self, as the god that is to be served, and the world, as the god that is to be enjoyed.

But then, we must observe, by the way, that as there is towards these two substituted objects a violent propension; so it is forbidden only under that notion wherein it is excessive. It is no unlawful thing for a man to love himself, and even his meaner self; but to love himself with that love wherewith he should love God, that is sinful. It is no unlawful thing to love inferior creatures, things of this world, which God made all very good; but to love them with that love wherewith we should love God, as our supreme and highest good, herein stands the sinfulness of this propension. These are to be in the room of God; not to serve ourselves under God, but above him and against him; not to enjoy and please ourselves in this world, in subserviency and obedience to God, but in direct opposition.

And so there is, upon this account, not only no inclination towards God, (which was considered under the former head,) but there is direct enmity. Not only, in this case, doth the soul not love him with all the heart, mind, and might; but it hates him. And this is the character of the apostate world. Look to that Rom. i. 28. "They liked not to retain God in their knowledge." And a little lower, they are called "God-haters." The word signifies, they hate him with a stygian hatred, they hate him as one would hate hell; that is the signification of the word "God-haters," which sums up the malignity of this corrupted nature of man, that is made out in so many particulars in all that latter part of that 1st chapter to the Romans.

So likewise, in reference to their fellow-creatures, when this love is wanting, which they should bear to them, and which is the radical principle that comprehends in it all duty of that kind, (that is, doth virtually comprehend it all,) the want of that due disposition is supplied by a contrary principle; that is, by one contrary thereunto, which is that of "being hateful and hating one another," mentioned Romans i. 30, 31. and Titus ii. 3. And it is, too, upon this account, that "self" is one of the two substituted idols, as you have heard. And because the interest of this "self" interferes, and there are now as many deities to be served as there are men; hereupon it is, that jealousy works into hatred. And it partly proceeds, too, from the narrowness and minuteness of this world, which is the other idol that men set up in the room and stead of God. This world is too little for men; (it cannot but be so;) too little for immortal souls. It is a thing in its own nature unsuitable to them; but yet, men being deceived, think to have their all out of it: and so they are all pulling and tearing one from another, every one for himself, to make his own portion out of this world as great and considerable as he can, still imagining he shall repair his loss of God out of this world. And all being under the power of this delusion, they do not consider, that "there is a lie in their right hand;" that they are seeking that in this world which it can never afford them.

But hereupon, instead of that love which should be "the fulfilling of the law" of the second table, spoken of

Rom. xiii. there is that enmity, that mutual hatred of one another, that hath for so many ages made this world an *aceldama*, a field of blood; and comprehends and sums up all those lusts, from whence come wars and fightings among men: among men, I say, who lay under the obligation of so equal a law, and so kind a law of love, which so directly tended to the welfare of mankind; and so would have made this world a heaven upon earth, every one loving one another as himself, and seeking another's good as his own: whereas, all make it now their business to tear this world out of one another's hands as much as they can, and to pluck it in pieces, and so to worry and destroy one another for it.

And in reference to men themselves too. In the room of a right disposition towards themselves, there are substituted wicked propensions: they do affect themselves wickedly, sinfully, illegally, against the direction of the divine rule: and this is the root of all the insincerity that is to be found any where in the world, that is, that the superior powers do not govern the inferior, do rebel and disobey. The mind and judgment that should govern the will, and its determinations, and purposes, this way and that, neglect their office; so that in the mind, now, is blindness; not generally a not seeing, but refusing to see, a willing blindness; that which the Scriptures express by "blindness of heart." There is error, self-deception, about the most important and most practical matters; the calling of good, evil, and evil, good. There is somnolency and drowsy slumber upon the minds of men; a supine negligence, that they cannot consider nor care how things go within them, or what is uppermost.

Then again, there is, in the inferior soul, the imaginations, the appetites, the affections or passions, a continual mutiny and disorder, a rebellion against what doth remain of the law in the mind; so that what remains is very imperfect, much obscured, shattered, and broken: yet, there is a continual mutiny and insurrection against these relics of that law. And this, indeed, constitutes a man, within himself, the continual seat of a war; he is in a state of war with himself: for he hath some light in his mind; but there are these mutinous and rebellious appetitions and passions working in continual opposition thereunto; so that he cannot raze out those notions he hath in his mind: "This I should do, and that I should do so;" nor will his inferior faculties be induced to any kind of compliance therewith. It is not such a war as in the regenerate, to wit, in one and the same faculty, and especially in the heart and will, where there is an imperfect inclination to that which is good, but yet victorious. But the war lies here, between that which should be the governing faculty, the mind, the practical judgment, the conscience, and the mutinous dispositions of a rebellious heart, that are entire, and in their full strength, in the unregenerate; whereas, in the regenerate, they are subdued and brought under; not quite expelled, but yet conquered.

Thus, we have the true state of the case, how it is with men with respect to the sinfulness of their nature, which lies spread through all the several powers and faculties of the soul, and shows itself with reference to the several objects wherewith men can be any way concerned. But we are to consider,

(2.) The universality of this revolt; that is, that all men are in it, they are all gone back; all men, and the all of every man. All men are in it. And it is, therefore, on the whole matter, not strange that this corruption of the nature of man should be represented with such rhetoric as we find in divers passages of Scripture: as in the 14th and 53d Psalms, and Romans iii. where you have divers passages quoted out of the Old Testament, especially out of the book of Psalms, of that same import, to signify, how general a consent there is in this matter of man's rebellion; that as men have agreed herein with infernal spirits, so they do generally agree with one another: "Come, let us cast off his cords, and throw away his bands from off us." All, from the highest to the lowest, agree in such a design as this.

If you would take a brief view of the state of the case, that 3d of the Romans will give it you very shortly and succinctly, and yet, withal, very copiously and fully. The apostle tells us, that he had proved (as indeed he had done in the 1st and 2nd chapters of that epistle) that "Jews and Gentiles were under sin." Those two distributing terms, Jew and Gentile, taking up the whole of the world, and was then the known distribution of the world of mankind. And he had not only said it, but proved it, that they were all under sin; even the very Jews themselves, as well as Gentiles, though a select people, a people that had the oracles of God, the peculiar tokens of his presence and favour, (where grace was not victorious,) yet, as great an enemy appears among them against God, as in the pagan world and nations of the earth.

And if you look into the 1st Romans, and the latter end, you see, that men having expelled and driven God out of their minds and thoughts, as not liking to retain him in their knowledge, what becomes of them hereupon? Why, God gives them up, leaves them to themselves: they become now to be under the dominion and power of exorbitant and unruly affections and passions. "God gave them up to vile affections; and as they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them over to a reprobate mind:" and hereupon, they are filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters; and (that which is central of all the rest, which was noted before) haters of God; despiteful, proud, boasters, inventers of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.

Here is a representation of the apostate world, of that wickedness which all proceeds from the corrupt fountain which every man hath in himself. And then, in the 3rd chapter, he goes on to add, from the Psalmist: "There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no not one." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," both as it was to be their end, and as it was to be their transforming pattern. Thus it is, as to all men.

And so, the all of every man; which divers expressions in that 3d Romans do most emphatically represent and hold forth to us. "Their throats is an open sepulchre, with their mouths they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips: their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known." Even the several parts of the outward man are made use of, as so many engines and machines for wickedness. And for the inward man, the source and fountain of it, we are elsewhere told, that "all the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart are only evil; and continually" so; Gen. vi. 5. So early had that universal contagion spread itself among *all men*, and through the *all of every man*.

And hence it is that they are so frequently spoken of (even notwithstanding a profession of God's own name, if they remain in the unrenewed state) as "a generation of vipers, and as a seed of evil doers;" yea, (as was said before,) as the seed of the devil, that old serpent. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do." And hence it is, that all wickedness do proceed, which we have any where seen perpetrated and done, upon the stage of this world. So that when the renewing work comes to take place, there is need that it should pervade, should pass through, the whole man. "The God of peace sanctify you throughout in your whole spirit, soul, and body." You see, every part of man needs a sanctifying influence; and therefore, all is corrupt and impure.

Before we go on, let us make somewhat of present useful reflection to ourselves. And consider, Is it not, hereupon, wonderful that there should be among men so general a self-complacency? How strange is it, that this being the state of the case with men in this world, there should be among them, I say, so general a self-complacency! that they all should seem to be so well pleased with themselves! look with a kind eye upon themselves! that it doth not come into men's minds to think, antecedently to their recovery, to their regeneration, "I am a fallen creature, an apostate creature, one separate and cut off from God, by mine own revolt; one fallen in with the devil against God;

that am in league with him to do his will, and to disobey *him* who gave me breath; who is the Father of my spirit, and the author of my whole being."

Are not these true thoughts that a man might think of himself, being yet unregenerate, unrenewed? And is it not strange, when they are things that lie so much in view, they yet should so seldom come into men's minds? Can we think it possible, if they did come oftener, that they should be so well pleased with themselves? Yet this they are generally prone to be. It is the character of the wicked man, that is, one that continues yet in a state of apostacy, that "he flatters himself in his own eyes, (Psal. xxxvi. 2.) until his iniquity be found to be hateful." He still looks upon himself with a self-flattering eye. If there be any thing which, abstractly considered, may be looked upon as amiable, this is singly looked upon: but it is seldom, in the mean time, thought, but generally forgot, what is a man's state.

O! how few are there that cry out, "What is the state of my case? If I have strength, if I have wit, if I have any thing of comeliness, I can presently strut and think, What a fine creature am I! But, in the mean time, that I am a rebel against heaven; I am an accomplice with the devil against God; I am an apostate from my rightful, sovereign Lord." This would surely turn all men's self-complacency into horror and consternation, that a man would be afraid of himself, and wish he could run away from himself; and wonder how the earth comes to bear such a creature. O! this monster of an apostate soul that is off from God, and without a disposition or inclination to return to him, carries so much of horror and prodigy with it, that it is strange all are not filled with fright and amazement, till they find some manifest proof of a regenerating, transforming grace upon their spirits: it is strange that, till then, they are not a continual terror to themselves.

LECTURE XXVI.*

BUT that which doth yet give us a fuller and more dreadful account of this state of the case, is, besides the consideration we are to have what man is in himself, and in his faculties and powers, precisely considered, which do make up the sinfulness of his state, and which might be mentioned under this head, is,

(3.) The aggravations of man's sinfulness.

[1.] We are to bethink ourselves, therefore, with whom there is a coincidency, and into what society and combination he falls, in this his corrupt state: and so, take the state of the case briefly and summarily thus; that he is, in all this, an accomplice with those apostate, disloyal, infernal spirits, that had revolted, and were fallen from God before: an amazing consideration! In all this, he is in confederation and combination with devils, with the powers of hell and darkness, against his rightful and sovereign Lord. And so doth the Scripture most expressly speak in divers places; so far as that the devil comes thereupon to be styled, "The god of this world," who "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not," 2 Cor. iv. 4.

And O! that we could consider this, according to what it doth import and carry in it of horror and detestableness. It is a thing that we do not yet believe, that a world inhabited by reasonable creatures, God's own offspring, are universally fallen into a confederacy and combination with another god, with an enemy-god, an adversary-god, against the living and true God. Men have changed their God. And what a fearful choice have they made! fallen into a league with those wicked creatures that were weary of his government before, and that were, thereupon, thrown down into an abyss of darkness, and bound up in the chains thereof, unto the judgment of the great day. But both the Scripture say this in vain? or hath it not a meaning, when it calls the devil, "The god of this world?" O! with what amazement should it strike our hearts, to think that so it is; that the whole order of creatures is gone off from God, and fallen into a confederacy with the devil and his angels, against their rightful, sovereign Lord.

It is not a thing spoken (as it were) once on the bye; but the Scripture doth industriously represent this as the settled state of the case with men. Look to the Ephes. ii. 1. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:—wherein we all had our conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." And under whose regimen is this? Why, "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that *now* worketh in the children of disobedience." They live subject to the government of that prince: and that is a long-continued *now*, referring to the whole time and state of the apostacy. It speaks the fixed state of this case, that as long as men do remain dead in trespasses and sins, as it is in the 1st verse of that chapter; and all the while that that death lies upon the world, which, as we are told in the text, "hath passed upon all;" all that time, during that long-continued *now*, all their actions, all their motions, all their designs, are "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." They are led captive by him at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26. He hath his will of them. "The lusts of your father ye will do," John viii. 44. That "will" is not a sign of the tense, but a distinct word, "you will;" you will to do the lusts of your father; you have a proneness, a propension of will, or it is grateful to your will, to do the lusts of your father: the devil is become even a father and a god to this apostate world: they are the serpent's seed; he hath (as it were) impregnated them with all the principles of malignity and disloyalty, against their rightful, sovereign Lord.

Methinks, this should make us afraid of ourselves, and even of one another, till there be some appearance of a change in the state of our case. We look upon it as a very terrible thing, to have the body of a man possessed with a devil; but how much more dreadful is it, to have his soul under that possession; acted upon by Satan in all his designs through the whole of his course, led captive by the devil at his will! Waiting if God will give repentance; that is represented as the great business of the Gospel ministry, and of a Gospel minister, as in 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. to wait with patience, and endeavour with gentleness, that they may be brought to repentance, and enabled to recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are led captive by him at his will. See what his part then is, as a god over this world; he makes them do what he will, he hath his will upon them. "My will is, that you forget God; and they do; that you may live in a continual contempt of God; and so they do: that you mind nothing but the affairs of this world, and how to please and gratify your flesh and sense, mind nothing but what shall, or shall not, profit your external part, or insnare and hurt you, and undo you; and they do just as he would have them do, throughout the whole of their course. So that, in this state of the apostacy, they are in a continual confederation as accomplices with devils, those apostate spirits, that were gone off from God before.

[2.] It is a further aggravating consideration of this sinfulness, that the understandings of men do all this while remain with them; they have their understandings yet about them. Man is still an intelligent creature. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding," (Job xxxii. 8.) to distinguish him from a brute. It is very true, indeed, if sin had totally unmanned men, it had brought them into an utter incapacity of sinning any more. If the leading faculty were destroyed quite, he were then no more capable of sin than a log. But this makes the matter beyond all imagination wonderful, that a man should have his understanding remaining, and become such a monster as this; and yet apprehend nothing of it: an understanding that he can use about other matters; he can discourse, reason, project, lay designs, form methods in reference to all things that are of an inferior concernment. We find that in the great transformation of that haughty prince Nebuchadnezzar, (whom God turned to graze among the wild beasts of the field,) a transformation, not of his body, (as we have no reason to think that it was,) but of his mind; and we

* Preached April 7th, 1694.

are told, that at the end of so much time, his understanding returned to him. But in this common case men's understandings do remain with them all the while they are under this monstrous transformation; that is, while a reasonable, immortal spirit disaffects his Maker, the Father of spirits; joins itself with clods, the base things of this earth; yea, joins itself to devils, apostate, impure spirits, and falls into confederacy with them against God: and yet men are not aware of their case.

And this makes that transformation which sin hath wrought in the very nature of man, in the soul of man, his reasonable soul, so horrid a thing. If he had been transformed into any other bodily shape, (though never so monstrous,) it had been incomparably a less monstrous translation than this: to make a reasonable, understanding creature, engage in a contest against him that gave him breath, the Author and Parent of his life and being, nothing could be a more monstrous thing. If all these metamorphoses which poets feign, had generally taken place and effect every where among men; if they had been transformed into trunks of trees and the like, (as hath been feigned concerning divers,) it had been a less strange, a less fearful transformation than this; a reasonable, intelligent, immortal spirit, turned against his Maker, and intent upon razing out every thing of his holy image out of itself.

Now this understanding still remaining, the persisting in a way and course of sin, is a running counter to that light and knowledge which every man hath, in a degree, remaining in him, though it is but a dubious kind of twilight; light that doth rather admit to be called "darkness." "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!" that is, it is ineffectual to answer the proper purposes of a directive, practical light; yet what doth remain thereof, doth serve most highly to aggravate the wickedness of them in whom it is.

This is that which is more than intimated, when men are required to show themselves men; as it is in Isaiah xlvi. . You have the proper principles of humanity yet about you, and the great distinguishing principle of reason, that exalts you above inferior creatures; you have it in you, but you do not use it; you are men, but you do not show it: "Show yourselves men, ye transgressors." And again, Psalm liii. 4. "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?" It is implied that they have it, but they will not use it; the interrogation is a more forcible affirmation: men have knowledge in them, yet transgress; and so keep up a contest and a war against God, and against themselves. And again,

[3.] It is a further most aggravating consideration, that as, in general, they have understanding about them, and still remaining with them, they have also some natural notions of God, all the while they are thus at war with him, and in this defiance against him. Still they have the natural impress of God upon their minds that they cannot raze out; so that they do not fight against him altogether in the dark; "Light shines in the midst of that darkness which comprehends it not." That light by which God reveals himself, not only round about them, but in them; there is that which might be known of God in every man, as in that Rom. i. 19. That which might be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath revealed it to them.

And there is hereupon, such a thing as natural religion; for while they have a notion of God in their minds, it is not as of a being irrelative to them, but it is as an Object of worship; an object of trust, so as that commonly men, in their last necessities, untaught and uninstructed, do pray to him. As I remember that ancient, (Minutius Fœlix,) in opposition to paganism, asserting the oneness of the Deity, and that God whom the Christians serve, speaks thus: "You yourselves (saith he) when any thing ails you and are in distress, do not you use to lift up your eyes and hands to heaven? *vulgi isti naturalis est sermo*, this is a natural kind of prayer, which your own nature doth even constrain you to, whether you will or no: there is a natural susceptibleness of religion. Men are instructed by nature itself, to dread a superior Being, and to place some kind of dependance upon it, and to have some kind of expectation from it, of help and relief in their necessities and distresses, and yet remain, all this while, in an apostacy, in war and rebellion.

This makes this monster of an apostate creature to be so much the more monstrous, beyond comparison; even beyond all that can be thought. The case being thus with them, that such sentiments of God as they have about them, they cannot erase, and yet, cannot obey; they can never get them out of them, nor comply with them: this is their case. So monstrous a thing is an unregenerate creature that remains yet in the apostate state. They carry about a notion of God with them in their minds wherever they go; and so have not only reason left them, but somewhat of religion; which some take to be a more distinguishing property in man than reason itself, it being less disputable whether it do peculiarly belong to man: to inferior creatures it manifestly doth not; and in great measure it is evident that it doth belong to all men. For those that have been the most diligent inquirers into the state of the world, in former ages, among the pagans themselves, have taken notice that it was even an impossible thing to hear of a man any where that had not somewhat of religion or some sense of a Deity in him. As, I remember, Plutarch saith; "It is not impossible to find cities without walls, without government, without coin;" but to find a city without religion, he thought to be altogether impossible. "And it were (saith he) as easy a thing to build a city without a foundation, without ground to set it on, as to form a society of men without religion." This was the apprehension of such knowing men as he and others, even among heathens themselves, in former times.

And this is the general matter of God's controversy with the world, when we are told in that Rom. i. 18. that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." What that truth is, we are to collect from what follows in the 19th ver. before mentioned; for that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath revealed it to them. He hath so inwrought his name, his own idea, into the spirits of men, that there it remains as an indelible impress, not quite to be razed out. And therefore they who have been more avowed atheists, have been so, more in endeavour than in fact; endeavouring to extinguish those notions of God out of their minds, which yet they could never rid themselves of. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." He hath said it in his heart; not with his mouth, not in his mind, but in his heart; which implies it rather a wish than an assertion. And so, the Hebrew text doth lead us to understand: for there is not the copula to make it an assertion: The fool hath said in his heart, "no God;" not that there is none, that is not in the text, but—"no God;" let there be none; or, O! that there were none; I wish there were none. It is rather a wish than an assertion with these fools. And these fools, they are the generality of the apostate world.

But that men should carry that notion in their minds about them, up and down the world; have (as it were) God so much in view, (if they will but look into themselves and commune with their own minds,) and yet should be continually warring and fighting against him, when they could not but at the same time conceive him to be God, but conceive him too, to be the very Author of their life and being; "He in whom (as the apostle quotes a heathen poet saying) they live and move and have their being;" and another saying, "Whose offspring they are;" his very offspring; and yet in a continual, general rebellion against him; this aggravates the matter beyond all measure. And again,

[4.] They have in them also the practical principles of right and wrong, in reference to one another. In this state of apostacy from God, they have, I say, practical principles; that is, principles that ought to govern practice, telling them what is right, and what is wrong, in reference to one another, as well as in reference to God; and yet there is nothing else but aversion, hating of one another, and designing against one another, and every one labouring to tear the world in pieces, that they may grasp into their own hands what yet lies in other men's. They do so far know what is right and wrong in reference to one another, that they can no sooner hear of the general measures of right and wrong among them, but their minds do inwardly consent to the reasonableness of such a constitution. As that great maxim of our Saviour; "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them," as

being that which sums up the law and the prophets. A saying so taken, even among heathens themselves, that it is known, that the emperor Alexander Severus caused it to be inscribed on the gates of his palace, as if it were the most suitable, agreeable thing to the minds of men, and to the necessities of human society, that could be thought. And,

[5.] Yet further, they have all this while a most connatural desire of their own felicity. This is a further aggravation, that every man naturally desires to be happy, when yet he is continually engaged in a way and course of sin, against his sovereign, rightful Lord, which so directly tends to involve him in all misery; and so, is doing perpetual violence to himself, and even to the law of his own nature; for there cannot be a more radical principle in any man, or even in the nature of man, generally considered, than to desire to be happy. "Who will show us any good?" is the common vogue, according to that of the Psalmist in the 4th Psalm. All the world is full of craving desires after felicity, after a happy state, and yet running on in a continued course directly counter hereunto; fighting every where against the desire of their own hearts.

[6.] It is a further aggravating consideration too, that, in all this time, they have some apprehension with them generally of a future state in another world, the soul of man having a secret consciousness of its own immortality inwrought into it. So that (as you have heard) mere irreligion hath been a thing very rarely to be known in the world, and never but as men have pretended and endeavoured to erase and root out the principles of religion out of their own souls; but without total effect. So there hath been no sort of religion in the world that hath not proceeded upon the supposition of a future immortality. Not only Christians and Jews, but Mahometans and the grosser pagans, have all agreed in this one sentiment, that "there is a life to come," and a state after this. And yet, they are continually taking the way that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death; though that sentiment is not more natural, more common, that there is another state, another world, a life to come, than the sentiment is, of the connexion between goodness and blessedness, and between wickedness and misery. They have generally apprehended so, as the apostle, in the close of the first chapter of this epistle, (referring to the Gentile world,) saith; "They did know the righteous judgment of God, and that they who did those things were worthy of death, and yet, not only did the same, but took pleasure in them." They did apprehend a connexion between wickedness and death, between sin and misery, and yet run the course which corrupt inclination carried them unto, without resistance. And again,

[7.] There is in them all this while a self-reflecting power, by which they are capable of taking knowledge of themselves, of looking in upon their own minds. "The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching into the innermost parts of the belly;" that is, searching into his most inward *penetralia*, into all the secret recesses of itself, even to the very centre. It is such a kind of light as can invert its beams, and turn them inward upon itself; being therein a nobler sort of eye than this external bodily one is. For this exterior bodily eye of ours that sees all other things, cannot see itself; but the mind, the intellectual eye, cannot only see other things, but can see itself too, is capable of contemplating itself. That conscience that is in man, that natural conscience, it is not only the conservatory of natural principles, the seat of them that show what men are to do, and what they are not to do, (as was told you before, under the former head,) but it is also a self-reflecting principle, that which is called properly and more strictly, συνείδησις, by which a person is conscious to himself what he is, and what he doth; what his dispositions are, and what the series and tendency of his actions are.

And yet, this principle is rarely used; rarely, in reflecting upon actions, and in reflecting upon their states; scarcely ever in reflecting upon their actions, very rarely; so that, among a people professing the name of God, he may long hearken, and hear none saying, What have I done? "I hearkened and heard; no man spake aright; no man said, What have I done?" Jer. viii. 6. Though they have that self-reflective principle in them, by which they are capable of taking cognizance of their own actions, they never do it, never allow themselves to say, What have I done? in a long tract of time. But every following day passeth as former days have done; and seldom, from morning till night, is there a self-reflecting thought.

Indeed, where natural light hath been improved, even among some heathens, they tell us it should be otherwise: *Vir bonus et sapiens; a good, a wise man*, will not go to bed at night, will not compose himself to rest, before he hath revolved with himself the actions of the day. So we are taught by a heathen instructor. But, though there have been some such instances, they are very rare, of those that allow themselves to reflect upon their actions; but much more rare, of those that reflect upon their state, that bethink themselves, or say, "In what state am I? How do things stand between God and me, whose creature I am, and under whose government I live?" And yet again,

[8.] It doth more highly aggravate all this wickedness, to consider, how inflexible men are, and averse to compliance with any means and methods for their reduction, whether they that are without the Gospel, or they that live under it. For those that are without it, that have no Gospel, no verbal Gospel, among them, such an aversion to all the methods of recovery doth very sufficiently appear: for, otherwise, if that were not the common temper of the world, even where the Gospel is not yet come, it would soon be among them, and nothing could have hindered it from spreading over all the world many ages ago, but an indisposition and opposition in the minds and spirits of men to the progress and diffusion of it. For there hath been no nation where the Gospel was, but they that were hitherto destitute of the Gospel, some or other of them, must have lain next to that nation where the Gospel was, so that it was impossible for them not to have heard the sound thereof; and, if there were not an indisposition in them, even in the minds of men, and a contrariety and disaffection, they would, at least, have been inquisitive; they would have examined—"Is such a declaration from God, or is it not?" which, if they had, it carries with it such undeniable characters of divinity, that inquiring minds could not long have been ignorant; but prejudice and disaffection have kept off the inquiry; which, if it had taken effect in one country, it would soon have reached another, and so another, till the world had been leavened with the Gospel long ago. Therefore, such aversion and disaffection to the Gospel appears even where there hath no Gospel yet come.

Besides that, even there, though there be no verbal Gospel, there is somewhat of a real one, that God shows himself placable, or no implacable, no inflexible, no irreconcileable enemy. He doth not carry it with men generally as one seeking their destruction, leaves not himself without witness, in that he doth good, and gives them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness, as in Acts xiv. 17. So the apostle speaks of God, in reference to his dispensations towards the pagan world; and he saith it unto pagans; "He makes the sun to shine on the just and on the unjust:" and requires of us, upon that very ground, to love our enemies, because he shows so very much philanthropy and good will towards men. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father, which is in heaven;" (Matt. v. 44, 45.) that you may appear such, that you may represent herein a God-like nature; for God doth so, making his goodness diffuse and spread itself through the world: so that "the whole earth is full of his goodness;" though it be so full of men's wickedness. And, Romans ii. 4 "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" As we have copiously shown from that text, that there is a manifest, discernible leadingness and ducture in the continued exercise of God's goodness, and particularly of his patience and forbearance, unto repentance.

But where the Gospel is, there this disaffection and prejudice doth most apparently and conspicuously show itself. Not only were the pagans of old accused to be "God-haters," (Rom. i. 30.) where he speaks of the Gentile world, but the very Jews too, where God's light did

shine, and where his grace and saving design did appear, and were most expressly testified; even of them our Saviour saith, "Ye have both seen and hated me and my Father," John v. 24. And hence came these complaints, even where the Gospel is: "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought and in vain," Isaiah xlix. 4. And, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isaiah liii. 1. quoted by the apostle, Rom. x. 16. "Have they all obeyed the Gospel?" —No; far from that; for Isaiah saith, "Who hath believed our report?" And in the close of that chapter, "All the day long have I spread forth my hands to a gainsaying and rebellious people."

The experienced unsuccessfulness of the Gospel, which we generally so much see cause to complain of and bemoan, speaks this continually. What representations have we of God, in Christ, intent upon a reconciling design! But how few are won! How few hearts touched! So that men are gone off from God, and there they affect to abide; they have chosen distance from God, and seem resolved to continue it, say we to them what we will or can. We speak to them in the name of the Lord, but they will not hear; and for the sake of their own souls, but they regard it not. And, which is still,

[9.] More aggravating, that is, it is a further addition to the load of aggravations, and adds unspeakably to it; men are all this while certain they must die; they are in no doubt concerning that; they know the things they are fallen in with, in opposition to God, can be enjoyed by them but a little while; they see not only that the fashion of this world passeth away, but they find themselves passing away; changes are upon them. It is a thing concerning which they can be in no doubt; they have no instance of any one that escaped death. And yet here is generally no consideration what shall become of them hereafter. They find they are not happy here, they are still crying and seeking to be happy, but obtain it not; and yet they have no concern to be happy hereafter; though they know they must be gone, and their places on earth will, in a little while, know them no more. They have continual instances before their eyes, of other wicked ones like themselves driven away in their wickedness, torn up by the roots, plucked from their dwelling-place and gone; they know it must shortly be so with them too; and yet have chosen a state of distance from God; they never look after him, till (it may be) their last vain dying breath is uttered in some such unreasonable desire as this, "Lord, have mercy upon me:" when they can live and sin no longer, then they cry to God for mercy.

These are all most fearful aggravations of this common wickedness that prevails in every one; and serves further to represent to us the sinfulness of man in his fallen state. I should next come to speak of the death that hereupon passeth over all men, as we have spoken of death as it befell that one, as it stood in the commination, and as it stood in the sentence. It requiring a further, and somewhat a distinct consideration, with reference to the universality of man, whose case doth (though not substantially, yet in very great and important circumstances) differ from him who was the first transgressor. But before I come to that, some use of this representation which hath been made of the sinfulness of man's state, should intervene.

LECTURE XXVII.*

AND there are many things which it is obvious to us to take notice of, for our instruction and use, from hence. As,

1. We may see, hereupon, how altered a creature man is; how little he is himself; or what that one man, by whom sin and death entered, at first was. You have lately heard in what estate God did at first create man: "So God made man after his own image," a God-like creature. Such a thing was man at first; thence called the son of God. "Who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the son of God," Luke iii. 38. A glorious pedigree run up backward, in its ascent, as high as heaven: "who was the son of God." And it is not supposable that God should raise up a son immediately from himself, unlike himself. Therefore, it was very suitable unto the state of things, that it should be so expressly told us, "God made man in his own image," which you have heard was to be understood not only of his natural image, as man hath a spirit in him that was naturally, essentially vital, intelligent, free, and immortal; but it was also, and more principally, to be understood of the moral image, comprehending both sanctity and felicity, and, according to which, man was made a happy and a holy creature, pure and blessed.

How unlike himself is he now become! Let none of us think that this concerns not us. Are we not also of the posterity of Adam, degenerate creatures, fallen from the original excellency of our own nature, and especially in respect of that conformity and inclination which were in our nature towards God, our great and common Parent? If any of you had a son that was newly gone forth from you, and you met him by and by, and he doth not know you; you tell him, "I am your father;" he replies, "No, it is no such thing, you are no father of mine;" would it not cut your heart? Who would not look upon it as a deplorable case? This is the common case; men are sunk into such deep ignorance and oblivion of God, the Author of their being, that now they retain no knowledge, no remembrance of him, no conformity to him, no inclination toward their ancient Original.

It is an amazing thing that it should be so! It is much more amazing that it should be so little considered, that this earth should be peopled with such inhabitants, every one having in him (that is, all that are of human race) an intelligent, immortal spirit, a mind capable of thought, capable of just thought, capable of duty, and capable of blessedness. But so miserably sunk into carnality and earthliness, that this body in which it should but dwell, therein it rots, therein it putrifies. And that which (as hath been said) was designed to be its mansion, is become its dormitory, and its grave. A living soul carnalized! A most horrid creature! And, as it is said, Adam was at first a living soul; ("so God breathed into him the breath of life, (that pure, divine, and heavenly breath) and he became a living soul,") so, then to have asked the question, "What is man?" must have been to receive the answer, "He is a living soul; he is all soul, and that soul all life." But now is this living soul buried in flesh, a lost thing to all the true, and great, and noble ends and purposes of that life which was at first given it.

It is true, indeed, that this is a thing much less than what is said of the second Adam, in that 1 Cor. xv. 45. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the second man Adam was a quickening spirit." This latter is a great deal more. A living soul signified him to live himself; but a quickening spirit signifies a power to make others live. That, the first Adam could not do: the more excellent kind of life which he had, (for there was a complication of lives in the first creation of this man,) he could not lose; but he could not give. He could not lose it from himself; but he could never have given it by any power or immediate efficiency of his own to another. Here, the second Adam, the constitution of the second Adam, was far above that of the first, in that he could quicken others; a quickening spirit, not only quickened passively, but quickened actively, such a spirit as could give spirit, and diffuse life.

But take this matter as it was—"The first man Adam was a living soul," with all that life in him in all the kinds thereof, which was the highest and most noble that could belong to a reasonable, intelligent soul: such a one he was; and now we have this living soul entombed. It is naturally a living soul, and naturally immortal still; but as unapt to serve and answer the proper purposes of that life which was at first given it, as if it were quite dead, dead towards God. It was principally alive towards him: that holy life which did belong to Adam's soul at first, could have none but God as its highest and noblest term: upon him it was terminated. Therefore, where there is a

* Preached April 21st, 1694.

restitution and recovery, this is the immediate effect, persons do "become dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 11. And here is now a living soul alive to sin, but dead towards God; dead towards the prime and most glorious Object; and dead to all the noble operations, for which it was originally and first made a living soul. And this is the state of man: like the living God in this respect he was; but now, towards him he is become a dead thing, putrid, and noisome, and offensive, even as a carcass. He is dead in that respect, wherein a soul may be said to be dead, which cannot be in a natural sense, as you have heard, and as is plain in itself; but only in a moral sense. In that sense wherein it can be said to be dead, in that sense it must be the most fearful alteration which hath passed upon it, that could be passed upon a creature: that is, it was alive towards God; and is become dead towards him, cut off from him by a self-separation. Therein lies the sinfulness of this death that we are considering, and which belongs to the present subject we have in hand to consider. That God hath hereupon retired from him; that is the punitive notion of this death. But the sinful notion of it lies in its severing, retiring, and withdrawing itself from God; plucking itself away from him, as it hath done in the apostacy; and as it every where doth as long as the state of apostacy is continued in.

Now it is become a most unlike creature to God, and most unlike unto its original self, that could be thought. It was a knowing, intelligent creature; and especially knowing God. This image of God, that was at first impressed upon it, stood in knowledge; now it is become ignorant of God, "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in it, and the blindness of the heart," Ephes. iv. 18. It was like him in knowledge; but now it is become most stupidly ignorant of what it is most concerned in. Is this God-like? It was a holy, pure creature; but now delighting to wallow in the impurest sensualities. Is this like God? It was a most orderly, regular creature; but now all confusion; its powers engaged in war against one another; the whole frame of man disorganized, the whole dependance of will and affections upon, what should lead them, an intelligent mind and judgment; but these shattered all to pieces. The whole frame is discomposed. Is this like the God of order? O! how unlike to God is man now become! And therein unlike himself, and unlike what he at first was. But,

2. We may further learn hence, that this world cannot, hereupon, but lie under divine displeasure. And it is most just and righteous that it should do so. This the law gives sufficient intimation of, wheresoever it comes: "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," Romans iii. 19. Impleadable at law, that is the import of the word there used, to signify God's having a just and legal controversy with all this world. He hath, in point of law, that to be said against it, which can never be answered; which admits of no apology, no defence. But again,

3. We may yet further learn, hence, that the sinfulness which hath spread itself among men in this world, cannot but be in a true sense natural, such as hath poisoned the very nature of man with an enmity and malignity against God; for you see it is universal. Nothing can be supposed to be common, but what must be understood to have some common cause, a cause that is common. But the text tells us, that "all have sinned." And whereas, (as was noted to you formerly,) it is said in the 3d chapter of this epistle, ver. 9. "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin;" (which Jews and Gentiles did divide the world;) and "There is none righteous, no not one," as the same apostle quotes from Psalm the 14th and 53d. This plainly speaks this contagion to have infected the nature of man, and to run with his propagated nature every where, from age to age, and from generation to generation.

It appears to be so, for that when, upon the general defection and revolt of this world from God, he was pleased yet, (in order to his asserting and preserving some interest therein,) to select to himself one people, one people to be peculiar to him; all the endearing favours of Providence, all the peculiar manifestations of light from heaven, all the intercourse that, in a more external way, God vouchsafed to hold with this people, (unless he did here and there powerfully transform their hearts,) still left them evidently as full of malignity, and of the enmity of wickedness against God, as if they had been the merest strangers to him in all the world. And, therefore, is he sometimes represented as calling heaven and earth as astonished witnesses against them: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," Isaiah i. 2. "My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would have none of me," Psalm lxxxi. 11. "He came to his own, but they received him not," John i. 11. What can this signify, but a deep depravedness of nature? Sin hath inwrought itself even into the very nature of man.

We have the same instances multiplied in the days of the Gospel. God hath shown more peculiar favours, vouchsafed distinguishing privileges of the highest external kind, unto sundry nations into which the light of the Gospel hath spread itself. But where is there greater wickedness in all the world, than in the Christian world? where greater than in reformed Christendom, as it is called? Where is there more avowed atheism? where is there higher insolency against heaven? more direct and open rebellion, tearing all the constitutions and laws, which they themselves pretend to own for divine and Christian? A deep depravedness this must argue.

You may see, in the continual springing up of one generation after another, that, even from infancy, sin still springs up with reason, and the improvements of the natural faculties. So that as soon as any do begin to act rationally, they begin to act wickedly. Heathens have observed it, and speak of it with regret, and take notice how a child neglected grows monstrously vicious: common experience tells us this. Education, indeed, (which therefore ought to be practised with a great deal more care and diligence than it is,) doth somewhat repress, but it doth not change and alter nature. You see that the corruption of it proceeds, even with the nature itself, from the immediate fountain. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;" so the penitent Psalmist confesseth concerning himself, Psal. li. 5. And it is generally spoken concerning the wicked, (as all the world doth naturally appear to be,) that "they are estranged from the womb, and go astray as soon as they are born," Psal. lviii. 3.

This was a notion that did obtain so much among the Jews, that you see with what severity some of the worst of them fall upon the blind man: (John ix. 34.) "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?" implying, that he who would take upon him, in an extraordinary way, (not being called,) to be a teacher and instructor to others, must be some very extraordinary person, must be born a sinless man. A testimony that they give against themselves unawares; for they had such a Teacher among them, but regarded him not; a Teacher that came forth from God, and that was not born in sin. "Thou art altogether born in sin, no better than any other man, and dost thou take upon thee to teach us?" And again,

4. We may further learn hence how little reason men have to think it strange, that the state of things in the world is not so constantly favourable, or so benign to them, as they could wish, or are apt to expect; that they meet with many things so ungrateful; that men find themselves subject to pain, sicknesses, crosses, in the course of providence; that they meet with disappointments so often; that so many are reduced to straits, and wants, and distresses pinching poverty and the like; that there is so much of confusion, and disorder, and violence in the world, the inhabitants of it ready to tear one another and the world in pieces. Why, all have sinned. This gives an easy ready account. O! how little is it considered when people are so full of complaints of their own particular ills and evils. "Nobody's case is like mine. How am I injured and wronged by some or other that are stronger and mightier than I! My right is withheld from me;" and the like. Alas! poor creature, dost thou so little consider how thou hast wronged God, and withheld from him his right in thyself, in thy life and soul, and all thy powers? Saith another, "I have a child sprung up in my family, I have a son that is undutiful and rebellious, a perpetual vexation to me." How little is it considered that thou

nast carried it with much more undutifulness towards God, who was the original Author and Parent of thy very life and being. You think, when you are sick, you suffer a very great hardship; you do not consider what it is to have been a sinner, to have torn the constitutions and laws of heaven, and violated the government of the supreme and rightful Lord of all. "Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?" Lam. iii. 39. "Let us search and try our ways;" let us once but take a clear view of our own ways, and that will stop the complaint. Consider what a vile creature I have been; so many years of my time gone, and I have never minded God; never paid him a duty; never thought of him with any reverence; never designed him any service; never resolved on living to him, but to myself. And yet, now, a little affliction that grates upon the flesh, makes us cry out, "O! how hardly are we dealt with." Again,

5. Have all sinned? Then instead of complaining, wonder at the divine patience, that things are no worse with the inhabitants of this world than they are; that men are allowed a being in it; that this world is not turned into flames over the offender's ears; that they are not continually pursued with divine terrors; that he is not, with more dreadful severity, exacting his right from his own creatures whom he made, (as their own understandings can tell them,) not for themselves, but for himself; and nobody minds him, when they so generally behave themselves with such insolency in this world, as if they had been the creators of it, as if they had made the heavens and the earth, sun, moon, and stars, and all things, the help and influence whereof they any way enjoy.

How admirable, I say, is the divine patience, that bears with offending creatures, lets them propagate and transmit their like from age to age, and from generation to generation, through that vast tract of time as hath hitherto past, since the apostacy! With what wonderment should we consider this power of divine patience! Who that hath it in his hands to right himself for such indignities and wrongs, would refrain? When we think how quickly, how easily, he can do himself right; can frown or wink such a world as this into destruction in a moment; that as it sprung up by his fiat, "Let it be," how easily could he frown it into nothing! yet he lets men live, lets them live neglecting him, when they have natures capable of adoration. But again, we have,

6. Much more reason to admire the divine bounty towards such creatures; not only that he spares and lets them live, but that he maintains them, and keeps them in life and being, each one for his measured time, and so provided that there should be a transmission of life from age to age, in so continued a course. How admirable should the divine bounty and munificence be in our eyes, upon this account! He doth good to the unthankful and evil! to those that never thank him for it. If you did but feed a brute creature, it would be brought by degrees, and in time, to take some kind of notice of you, with gratitude. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people will not consider." Men will not know their Owner, though the ox knows his. It is your Owner that cares for you; as who provides for the ox and the ass, but the owner? So God, as the Owner of you and of all the inhabitants of this world, all the children of men, (for I speak of these inhabitants,) he doth his part towards you and them. He provides for them, he maintains them, and affords them all that is suitable and needful for their support; but they will not take that notice of their Owner, which an ox or an ass takes of his. How wonderful a thing is this on God's part! how horrid a thing on man's!

I have thought of it many times, and it would be a thing not unworthy of your thoughts and serious contemplations, that we should, in so continued a course, find the earth so productive as it is of all things, not only necessary for the support of the life of man, but so grateful too; such pleasant, delicious fruits in their season. And for whom is all this entertainment? For a world of rebels, offending creatures; those that never look up: we enjoy all, as if it were our own, and never consider, we have a Lord over us, the free Donor of all. Again,

7. Since there are so many sinners in this world, (all have sinned,) it is very strange there are so few self-accusers; when the same light, and the same rational powers, by which men are capable of sinning, they are also capable of understanding themselves to be sinners. There is, indeed, a natural conscience in men, and it hath its exercise sometimes, and a very impartial exercise, in reference to some cases, but how little is there of conscience towards God! "Herein," saith the apostle, "do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men." So it is, where once regenerating grace comes to restore an entire divine image in the soul again, to do an entire work, to produce a general rectitude in the soul, there will be conscience towards God, as well as towards men. Towards men: there is among men some conscience, though too often violated when interest sways: many do not care whom they injure, to advantage themselves; but yet, while they do wrong, they cannot be altogether without reflection that they do wrong: and upon such accounts, chiefly, they have consciences "accusing, or excusing, by turns," Rom. ii. 15. But towards God, generally, no conscience at all; they live in the world as without him, and their hearts never smite them; spend days, and months, and years in vanity; throw away their lifetime, so as they are useful for nothing they were made for; and never say—"God, have mercy upon us;" never think a serious, reflecting thought. So it is with the most; they live at that rate, till in a moment they go down into the grave, and never consider what they have thrown away; a lifetime in the world, without ever minding the proper business of life. But,

8. We may also learn, hence, to take notice, with wonder, that there is so much self-complacency in the world, as one of the most incongruous things, the most monstrous incongruity in all the world, that men should generally be so well pleased with themselves. If things, in external respects especially, be well with them; if they find themselves to be in health; if they have any thing of natural strength and vigour about them; especially if they can take notice, they have wit above the common rate: if they have wealth; if they have reputation and esteem among men; if they have any thing of human dignity or grandeur; O! how well pleased are they with themselves, what self-admirers are men generally upon such accounts, without even considering, (and what a dash would one such thought be to all this,) "I am a fallen creature, an apostate creature, a sinner, one with whom Heaven hath a controversy, a rebel still, if not yet reconciled." Strange! that men should be pleased with themselves, and their little external circumstances, and forget this, "I am a lapsed creature, and under the displeasure of Heaven." But again,

9. We may take notice, hence, of the reason whence it is that there is so much displeasure and wrath against any, in this world, who look towards God and heaven. All have sinned, all are generally in a state of sin. It is by wonderful and peculiar grace if there be so much as an inclining thought God-ward, a thought of returning, if any frame their doings (as the prophet's expression is) "to turn to the Lord," this presently comes under observation: if men's doings be framed that way, if a man's way and course be shaped so as to look God-ward and heaven-ward again, then all that behold it, (and with whom there is not the same disposition of mind and spirit,) they are under a judgment, under a doom. Noah condemned the world. And as the righteous soul of Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, among whom he lived; so, no doubt, he also vexed them only by their observation of his better ways. And yet, further,

10. We have great reason, hereupon, to admire a divine hand and power in it, that there hath been any thing of religion preserved and kept alive in the world, through the several successions of time, unto this day. A world where all have sinned, all have been in apostacy and revolt from God, and war against heaven; it is from a mighty divine hand that there is any such thing as serious religion. Natural religion there is, and an ineffectual thing it is, every where, almost. But for serious religion, vital religion, such as shall speak itself to be such by a self-demonstrative evidence, that such religion hath been kept alive in such a world as this, from age to age, is one of

the greatest miracles that hath been wrought in the world since there was one! And further,

11. This serves to let us see how mighty a work regeneration is, or which the regenerating grace and Spirit, the Spirit of repentance, have to affect and work upon the soul. It cannot be a slight, superficial change that is to be made, where the depravation is so universal, and so total. The corruption of human nature, it hath not reached so little a way as the surface of the man only; it hath gone deep into the *penetralia*, into the inmost centre, into the very spirit of the mind: even that needs a renovation too. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," Rom. xii. 2. And the like expression in Eph. iv. 22, 23. "Put off the old man that is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds." O! do not think slightly of regeneration and repentance! think that they must have a mighty work to do; and that it must be a very deep change which is to be effected thereby, which must reach through a man, into the very inwards of his soul, and go as deep as corrupt nature hath done. And, in the last place,

12. How solicitous, hereupon, should we be, whether any such change hath been wrought in us, yea or no? Thus stating our case to ourselves: "Once, for certain, I was in apostacy from God, an accomplice of hell, with infernal powers, against the sovereign, rightful Lord of heaven and earth. Do I feel myself under a recovering influence? Am I upon a return? Is there any thing done, or doing in me, towards a renovation and effectual change?" If I be not changed, I am the same apostate creature still; that is the state wherein I persist, it carries this import with it; as if I should put it into these plain express words: "I have apostatized from God, and I will stand by it." This is the sense of many a soul, and that which words would truly express, if they were used to that effect. But many have the sense in their hearts, and yet do not consider that such horrid words as these would only serve to express that sense of theirs. "I am an apostate creature, and I will stand by it:" this is your sense while you do not turn, all the while you have no aim at turning, do design of turning. "I have rebelled from God, I have rebelled against him, and this is that which I will abide by; I will live and die by it." O! what a horrid thing is an impenitent soul! especially under a Gospel that makes so many overtures to men, of reducing apostates, and of reconciling afresh to God.

LECTURE XXVIII.*

2. Now it remains to speak of what is consequent upon this sinful state, to wit, *death passing upon all;* that which ensues upon this universal diffusion, and is, in great part, (as you will hear by and by,) complicated therewith. Now in speaking to this death that is said "to have passed through all, or over all," it must be in substance the same with that death which we have spoken to in the former part of the verse, that which befell that one first man. I shall therefore speak, first, of what is common under this notion of death; and then, secondly, come to consider the gradual differences afterwards.

(1.) For what this death signifies here in common, the larger discourse whereof I referred to this place. Why,

[1.] We must consider in it, that bodily death which (in common experience) all do undergo according to divine appointment. "It is appointed to all men once to die." There is a statute law in the case, that hath not been repealed, and that admits of no repeal; this lies upon the world: in the virtue of that law it is, that death hath reigned. As the strength of sin, so the power of death, even of this death, is in the law; that is, in the sentence of it, or in the commination annexed by way of sanction thereunto. If there were no law first, no man should die. And most plain it is, that this same bodily death, unto which all are subjected, it must be within the meaning of this death. "Death hath passed over all." For,

First, We find it to be, most expressly, in the sentence itself that was laid upon Adam, and as a comment upon the commination, that was at first given. The commination was before his fall; "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," die the death: the sentence was after his fall; and this death is fully enough signified by the sentence—"Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." It cannot but be meant, as being so expressly mentioned, both in the commination and in the sentence. And,

Secondly, The actual execution shows it to be meant, to be meant as one part of the penalty unto which transgressors are adjudged under the name of death. For though it be very true, that, abstractly considered, it may be looked upon only as a misery, or as a physical evil, yet, considering that God hath vouchsafed to govern his reasonable creatures by a law, and according to the tenor of a covenant, he would never lay any thing of afflictive evil upon them, which was not legally due. He will herein not go above the legal constitution, by laying any more than was due by law, though he might go as much below it as he would.

A righteous ruler will never exceed the law in punishing, though he may exceed it, without any injury, in showing favour. And the difference in these two cases is manifest, because that these promises of favour make those, to whom such promises are made, creditors, and make the promiser a debtor. But in the inflicting of punishments, the person to be punished is the debtor, and he that is injured and wronged, being the sovereign ruler, is the creditor *pœnæ*, which also the common phrase signifies, and shows it to be agreeable to the reason of mankind to look upon the ruler as the creditor *pœnæ*, and the offender as the debtor *pœnæ;* to wit, that phrase of *Dare pœnæ*. It is the person that is to be punished, who gives satisfaction to law and justice, and so, thereupon, is said to owe it; and it is the government that is the creditor he owes it to.

There would be, then, no such thing as this bodily death in the world, if the violation of the law of God had not made it a debt to divine justice, and to the divine government, as the proper wages of sin. God will not lay upon man more than is right, (more than is just and due according to law,) that he should enter into judgment with God, Job xxxiv. 23. Whereupon, the execution, (of which all the world hath experience from age to age; for we see the world hath been continually and actually under death, and we still daily behold death round about us,) this actual execution, I say, shows that this must be part of the designed penalty signified here by "death."

And unto this head we may very well refer all those corporeal evils and miseries that men in this world are liable to, and lie under, which are so many tendencies unto death, or which we may look upon as death begun; so much of a man's time as is past over with him, so much death hath eaten up; as the heathen moralist expresseth it: *Quicquid nostræ ætatis retro est mors habet; death hath devoured all that of our age which is already past;* so that men may be said to have begun to die as soon as they begin to live, which makes it seem congruous enough, or less strange, that Ecclesiastes the preacher, speaking of the events or purposes for which there is a season, unto every one a time, he speaks of a time to be born, and a time to die, without any mention of the intervening time of life; and fitly enough, or it is not strange, because, indeed, men do begin to die as soon as they begin to live.

Death is wrought with the very *primordia* of our sensitive nature; so that well might that prince say, upon the loss of his son; *Novi me genuisse mortalem; I begot him and mortality in him, both together.* I begot him a mortal thing. Death is working in us, (as the apostle's phrase is,) all our days, all our time, between our birth and the grave, still working in us. And so the longer any man lives in this world, he is but so much the longer a dying. Death did for a great while work more gradually and slowly, where a man's life extended to some hundreds of years. It hath since come to work a quicker despatch with men; but still they are dying, tending towards the grave, even from their first entrance into the world; and this is part of what is signified by death here. But yet it is, in comparison, but a small part, though it be a real one, a true part. Therefore,

* Preached April 8th, 1694.

[2.] Spiritual death is, without doubt, more principally intended, as it is in itself a far more principal evil; that is, all those miseries which do now in this present state infest the spirits of men. And this needs a little more to be insisted on. Herein, therefore, I intend (as God shall enable) these two things; first, to show you that such spiritual evils as these, are very fitly comprehended as part of the penalty under the name of death; and then, secondly, I shall show you, what this death doth comprehend in it: namely, spiritual death.

First, That the spiritual evils to which the souls of men are generally subject, are very fitly comprehended under the name of death here. That death that is said to "have passed over all," is a real and great part, even the more principal part, of the penalty under which they lie; and this doth need some explication, the rather for this, that this spiritual death is in itself a sinful evil, and, therefore, that it should be a punitive one, may seem strange to some. I shall explain the whole matter to you, therefore, in some distinct heads and particulars. As,

i. We are to consider, that though sin be principally an injurious evil against God, yet it is also by consequence, and collaterally, a mischievous evil to the sinner. And thereupon are we said to be "dead in trespasses and sins," Ephes. ii. 1. Death is certainly a horrid and afflicting evil to him that must suffer it. But such a death as this, to wit, to be dead in sin, it is primarily an injurious evil against God. For we are to consider what sin is. It is a transgression of the law: therefore, considered in strict propriety, it must be chiefly and principally against the Lawmaker, a transgression against him that made the law; to wit, as a wrong to him. But yet, for all that, it is a hurt to ourselves. It lies both against the Object and the subject. Against the Object; "Against thee, thee only have I sinned," have I offended. It works upward even against heaven; but that it cannot reach, to do any real hurt there; but a wrong is done against heaven. "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." But then it works downward so as to hurt and do mischief; that is, as it works in the subject, corrodes and envenoms, and poisons that, and so carries a self-punishing malignity in it. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee." Again,

ii. Consider, for the clearing of this matter, that that life unto which this death is opposite (as it is in us, or as it is in an intelligent subject) is, both a principle of action, and perception. I pray mark this, for it is obvious in the meaning of it to every one's understanding and experience. By that life that we generally live, we are enabled to act what we do act, and we are enabled to enjoy what we do enjoy. It is both a motive and active; and it is both a perceptive and fruitive principle. Now consider this life, as it is an active principle, so it makes us the subjects of duty, of all duty which we owe to him who made us, and gave us breath and being; but as it is also a perceptive and fruitive principle, so it makes us capable of enjoying what is good for ourselves. And again,

iii. This being plain in itself, we are to consider, that both our duty, which we owe to God, and our felicity, which we enjoy in ourselves, they are substantially and radically the same thing, and do only differ in distinguishing respects; they meet in one and the same root, and which is the principal thing in the moral life, (that life we are now speaking of; and it is death in the moral sense, and not in the natural sense, that we are now speaking of so; for in the natural sense, the soul cannot die,) I say, that moral life doth carry, as the principal thing in it, both our duty and our felicity, in the same common root; to wit, love to God; that is, both radically and virtually, all our duty, and all our felicity too. And it is the main thing to be considered in moral and spiritual life.

The love of God, I say, comprehends both these in it. It comprehends duty; "If ye love me, keep my commandments." We can never do that which he will interpret obedience, but from a principle of love. It is no obedience to him, if it do not proceed from love. And again, the same love, our love to God, is that by which we enjoy him, as well as that by which we obey him. We can enjoy what we love; but what we love not we can never enjoy. And so that life to which this death stands opposed, carries in it that one principle of love, which sums up our duty and our felicity both together, and is radically both of them; upon which account they are in substance the same thing.

But they differ only in the different respects that love hath, as it respects God, the Ruler of all this world, (and to whom we ought to obey and be subject to as our Ruler,) so this love is the principle of duty: but then, as it respects ourselves, so it is the principle of enjoyment; that is, it eyes God, pitches and terminates upon him, but with a reference to ourselves. And,

iv. These acts, proceeding from this principle of love, which have a more direct tendency unto God, do yet involve and carry in them a gainfulness and gratefulness to ourselves, so as that our felicity and duty will still be complicated in those consequential acts. As, for instance, where our felicity is most complete in the heavenly state, the eternal adoration of God, which is the immediate and perpetual product of the highest and most perfect love to him, it cannot but infer perpetual pleasure to them that do so adore. And though that act be carried directly towards God, yet it infers a delight, a pleasure, (as it cannot but do,) to perfectly right minds, to them who are everlastingly so employed and taken up. And I can apprehend nothing higher than that, in the pleasure of the heavenly state; to wit, the felt congruity of everlasting worship, the soul apprehending and feeling within itself, and relishing, with delight, its own act in adoring and worshipping God for ever, and finding how congruous a thing it is, how comely a thing. And so that which is a right to God, is also a satisfaction and delight to the soul itself, that renders it, and is continually paying that homage.

And again, too, in this our present state, wherein felicity can be but begun; and if you look to the very beginning of that, the first turn of the soul towards God by repentance, which enters it into a holy and happy state. It is called "repentance towards God," it directly terminates upon him; but when once it comes to be true, genuine, evangelical, vital, even that itself cannot but carry a sweetness and pleasure in it to the penitent soul. For it is not a forced thing, but an act that flows freely from a vital, connatural principle; the soul pleaseth itself in abasing itself, in humbling itself, before him, in pouring out itself in free confessions and acknowledgements to him. And then, consider further,

v. That for such acts as do more directly respect ourselves, they do involve and carry still in them, homage and duty to God too, though they do more directly respect ourselves: as trust and joy in God, they have a manifest reference to our own safety, and a direct reference thereunto. By trust in him, it is, that we secure ourselves, and, by which, we become safe from wrath and ruin. Joy, or delight in God, it is that by which we entertain, and receive into our own souls, positive good, by which we are to be happy and satisfied. As by the other, (trust,) we decline and avoid the evil by which we were otherwise to have been miserable, these have a direct reference to ourselves; but, they have a consequential reference, too, unto God, or, a conjunct reference, as carrying in them a homage to him, while, at the same time, they carry in them an advantage to us.

For we cannot render to God higher homage than that trust. It is vital trust, by which the soul unites with him, comes into union, enters into a state of union with him. By that trust, we give him the highest glory creatures are capable of giving him; we, thereupon, acknowledge him to be the first truth. We give him the glory of that great attribute of his faithfulness; we acknowledge him to be a God that cannot lie, with whose nature it is inconsistent not to be true; we honour him, and advantage ourselves, at once, in that very act. And so, delight and joy in him, there the case is the same: it is we that are satisfied by our delight in God; but it is God that is glorified: for thereby we acknowledge him to be an all-sufficient Good, an all-comprehending Good, when our souls do centre and rest in him as such; which is the true notion of delight; *Quies appetitus in appetibile*, the rest of the desiring faculties in the object desired: it is the rest of our love; that by which our love doth move towards its object, till it attain and possess it. And then,

vi. It is hereupon most plain, that the death which is

opposite to this life, (that I have so far opened to you,) while it is an injury to God, it is also a hurt to yourselves: for the same reason that life doth involve these two things in it, even in all the several acts of it; by the same reason, it must needs be so, on the opposite hand; to wit, that death must comprehend in it opposite things; and that the same evils that are sinful against God, cannot but be hurtful, and pernicious, and mischievous to ourselves. And,

vii. Those evils, that are so said to be signified by this name, are very fitly signified by it, very aptly: for, though such a death of the soul be not death in the absolute sense; for, if it were death in the absolute sense, then would the soul be said naturally to die, which would not consist with the doctrine of its immortality; but, it is death in a respective sense only;—yet it is, however, properly, death, inasmuch as that respective sense must needs mean the principal respect, that such a thing is capable, or can any way admit of; to wit, a respect to the end. A respect to the end is always the most principal respect of any thing whatsoever, though it be clothed with various respects besides its own simple nature: its respect that it bears towards its proper adequate end, is always to be reckoned its principal respect. Now, look upon man, principally as to his soul or spirit, (which is the subject of our present discourse, and the subject of this death, which we are now speaking of, spiritual death,) and it is to be considered this is a created being. He that made it, made it for somewhat. What is the end of such a being as the spirit of man? What was it made for? It is a mind, an intellective thing, an intelligent being, unto which belongs the power of thought, and that of vast compass, extending to multitudes, even to all sorts of objects, and to the very highest of all objects; for, God hath made us capable, even of thinking of himself, of having an idea of him, a notion of him, which all have, more or less, in their minds. Now it is to be considered, I say, What hath God made such a creature as this for? this mind, or spirit of man? Why, principally, to converse with himself. For he hath made all things for himself; and the spirit of man more immediately for himself, as he is said to have fashioned the spirit of man within him. That must be with design that it should be employed immediately upon him, as the principal and most noble end for which it was made: but, to this end, it is become useless; the spirit of fallen man, apostate man, unconverted man, yet remaining in the state of apostacy, not regenerate, not renewed in the spirit of his mind, (the great seat and subject of that regenerating work,) it is altogether unapt for the end that it was made for, nothing can be plainer.

Therefore, though it be not simply dead, yet, it is dead *quoad hoc*, it is dead to this purpose, it is dead in this respect; and that is the principal respect that such a thing is capable of: for the principal respect is, the respect it bears to its end, its great and ultimate end, the end that it was made for. Any man that will understand himself to be God's creature, especially that he hath a mind and spirit in him that God hath, himself, fashioned immediately, he must needs presently apprehend this mind, this spirit, was made for some more principal purpose, than only to mind the things of this earth, than only to serve a brutal flesh for a few days, that must, at last, rot in the dust: no man, that communes with himself, and considers his own nature, that hath such a thing as a mind and spirit about him, but must presently apprehend, "Sure this mind and spirit of mine, which is impressed with the natural image of God, and which immediately proceeds from him, (who is, therefore, called the Father of spirits,) must be made principally to converse with him, to employ itself principally upon him, by acts of love, and trust, and adoration, and subjection, and the like."

But, most plain it is, that the spirits of men are become altogether *inhabile*, unapt, to serve this end, for which they are made, and so are truly said to be dead in this respect; that is, dead to the principal use and end for which such a being is said to be made. And, therefore, when once the great regenerating turn, and change, comes to be made upon the souls of men, this is the effect of it,—they are "dead to sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ," as Rom. vi. 11. intimating, that before they were only alive to sin, but dead towards God and Christ. And what! Do we think that God ever made an intelligent and immortal mind and spirit, only to live to sin? they are only alive to sin before; but, when this change comes to be made, then they are alive to God: before, quite dead to God; and, so they are dead, in reference to their principal end and the proper design of their creation, that they were made for.

And so, it is a death in equivalence, it is an equivalent death; it is the same thing in reference to the end they were made for, as if they were not. As, if we speak of a human maker of any thing; if an artist have made such a thing as a clock or watch, he considers the end of it, that which it is to serve for; it is to measure time, to let me know the hour of the day, as it passeth. Why, suppose such an instrument as this made, and elaborated by a curious hand; what hath this in it? it hath in it motion, and the regularity of that motion. Motion alone would not make it serve this end, if that motion had not a regularity belonging to it. There is, in that instrument, (a watch,) such a thing as a balance, wheels that regulate that motion, so as that it shall not move at random; if it move at random, the design is lost, the use of it frustrated, though it should retain motion, and there were still a motive power in it; if its motion were nothing else but an uncertain hurry, you could never know how the time passeth by it. And, therefore, it were all one, though the thing remain, and though the motion remain; it were, I say, all one in reference to its end, as if there were no such thing, or as if it had no motion at all.

Take the needle of a compass—it has a mobility, it is put in such a posture as it may be easily moveable; but then, with all, it hath a verticity, that is, an aptness to turn and stand directly towards the north. If it retaineth never so much its mobility, and loseth its verticity, it serves not its end, it is unuseful so, and useless, as the needle of a compass; and it were all one as if it were not.

Suppose these instruments, that are mechanical, were some way vital; suppose a watch were a vital thing, and its motion vital; as it is but mechanical, when it hath lost all kind of the regularity of the motion, the motion itself remaining, it were all one as if it were dead; if it had been a living thing, it would no more serve its purpose now, than as if it were dead.

And so it is with reference to the spirits of men; if they do not serve the principal design for which they were made, then it is all one as if they were dead. God may say of them, "I have no more service from them than if they were dead, no more of love, no more of adoration, no more of dutiful observance are paid me by them, than as if there were no such things." It is to be considered, therefore, that that which makes the name of death, in this case, proper, is, that that life that doth remain to the spirits of men, that is, by which they live naturally, it no more serves the end and purposes for which such a mind and spirit were created and made, than if such a thing were quite extinct, and there were no such thing. And, thereupon,

viii. Though this, in itself, be a sinful thing, as an offence to God, it is never a whit the less a punishing thing to them that do offend, a punishment upon them, that is, they are left to punish themselves, because that they do injure God by that violation which they have made even of their own frame and natures; and so the same thing may very well be a sin, and a punishment too. And it is most reasonably so; for, do but consider the parity of the case, to what is obvious to our notice in human governments. If a man be a self-murderer, a *felo de se;* this is the very case, as a man cannot be dead in trespasses and sins, (sin being his own act,) but he must be a self-destroyer. In human governments, he that doth destroy himself, it is very true, he suffers this evil first, immediately, directly; he is the person that is killed, and hath lost his life; but here is, in the mean time, a wrong done to the prince, a wrong done to the community; the prince hath lost a subject, the community hath lost a member; and this is the case with every self-destroying sinner, in reference to God. And, he is liable thus to be impleaded: "Thou hast destroyed my creature." This interest of God, in all, is superior to any interest we have in ourselves; and this the sinner is to be accountable for. "Why hast thou undone my creature?

Why hast thou made my creature a miserable creature, that was capable of being a happy one?" Yea, the whole heavenly community have a just plea against any such one that perisheth, and so is eternally cut off from them by his own iniquity. "Duly, and by original right, you ought to have been a partaker with us; you ought to have been of our chorus, in worshipping, adoring, in loving and enjoying God eternally. But, you have cut yourselves off from God, and us." Therefore, it is no strange thing that this same death which carries in it the greatest hurt and mischief that we are capable of suffering in ourselves, should yet be also complicated with sin, as it is an offence against God, and an offence against the rest of his creatures,—especially those of the sinner's own order in the creation. So fitly is all that doth concern us, the whole of man, summed up in the fearing of God, and keeping of his commandments, as in that 12th of Ecclesiastes. This is the whole of man; the fear of God is nothing else but reverential love, carries love in it; that is the principle from whence we keep the commandments of God; these commandments are all summed up in love to God, and love to ourselves, and to our neighbours as ourselves. Where sin, therefore, comes to obtain, and take place, and be in power, there must be, at the same time, an injury done to God, an injury done to ourselves, and an injury done to the whole community to which we belong; so as that death, even spiritual death, is nothing the less capable of being intended here as a penalty and punishment, for that it is also complicated with sin: for, in the very nature of the thing, it cannot but be so, even in the very nature of the things themselves.

More is yet to be said in reference to what we further promised to show, that this is a real part of the penalty here meant, by the name of death, spiritual death, as it is the hurt and evil that does mischief to ourselves, to our own souls, to show that it must lie in the compass of that penalty, which, under the name of death, is here said to pass over all. And then, for the extent and comprehension of that, the several things that this spiritual death doth involve in it, that we are to speak of afterwards. But, in the mean time, from what hath been hinted of these two things—corporeal death, and spiritual death, it should entertain our thoughts with, and a little fix them upon, the prospect we have before our eyes. Now, by way of *Use*,

1. It is a doleful state that this world lies under, as it lies under that which is fitly to be called death; men, in continual succession, lately sprung up here in this world, swept away presently from it, sooner or later, but soon all; one generation coming, and another going, but the earth abides. For persons that are capable of using thoughts, to behold themselves in this plight, and to look round about them, and to behold this to be the common case; "Here we are, lately sprung up into being in this world, and we now we are to stay but a little while; dust we are, and unto dust we shall return." A most melancholy theme for man's thoughts, if he have not somewhat beyond all this to support his spirit, and to afford light, and lustre, and sweetness, and pleasure, to it; "life and immortality brought to light in the Gospel" of Christ.

Alas! it is strange, amazing stupidity that is upon the spirits of men, that this common case is so commonly slighted and made so little of. If death did make quicker despatches, (though we are certain of it, it can make no surer, for it reaches to every one sooner or later, but if it did make quicker despatches,) it would set towns and counties presently upon a lament, upon bemoaning themselves, and put them into a panic dread and fear. If the plague were (as sometimes it hath been in this city) sweeping away thousands in a week, in what a consternation would the minds of men generally be! You cannot have forgot, (many of you,) how it was. But let this matter be rationally considered, and whether it be so many thousands or so many hundreds, it is the same; persons are still mortal, and must as certainly die; it is, therefore, an irrational stupidity to be so little apprehensive of this.

When the plague came upon the people of Israel, (in that of Numbers xxxvi.) see what an outcry is raised among them! "Behold we die, we all die. How are we consumed with dying!" What a fright were they in! And yet, this case is no way different at all from the common case of all mortals, more than only this—dying a little sooner, or dying more together, more numerously. It is strange there should be a dying world always in view, and we should find death working in us, and yet we live so unmindful of it from day to day, and are so little apprehensive, that, in this respect, death hath passed, and is passing, over all. We do not speak to one another at such a time as this; we do not hear; we do not look upon one another's faces as so many mortal creatures; sure there is not an apprehension suitable to the state of such a case, in this respect, that we are all subject to corporeal death. And then,

2. For the other part of our prospect, sure we should stay a little upon it, in our deepest reflections; that is, thus, in sum, that the soul of an unregenerate man is a most miserable creature; dead, dead to the principal purposes for which such life was given, any such creature made. It were as good never to have lived; better, (upon many accounts better,) to have been an untimely birth, and never have seen the sun, than not to live to God; than to have a total indisposition in my soul towards him, to think of him, to love him, to delight in him, to make him my life and my all. This is strange, that it should be the common case, and so little understood, and so little considered, so little taken to heart. O! the restless thoughts that would continually possess such a breast if the matter were but understood, till the regenerating work come to obtain, and take place: "I am one that lives to as little purpose, as if I had never lived, as if no such creature had ever been."

As if we should consider the matter in reference to an inferior thing, belonging to our nature, to wit, the power of speech. Suppose a man should retain the power of speech, but hath quite lost his reason, which should govern his speech, so that he can speak still, but to no purpose; the use of speech were lost; for the design of speech was to convey the sense of one man's mind to another; but, when the reason is gone, which should form that sense in the man's mind, speech serves for nothing. It is just so with the souls of men, in reference to the principal end and purpose for which God hath made such a creature. They can think, they have a power of thought belonging to them, but not to no purpose! thought is internal speech, the speech of the mind within itself; there they can speak; that is, they can form thoughts, connect thoughts, but all to no purpose: for religion, that which should govern the motion of the mind, that is wanting, there is no such thing; this makes the soul of man a most miserable thing: it can move, it hath a principle of motion in it, which is essential to it; but it hath no principle of rest, no inclination towards God, the true rest of the soul. Do but illustrate that to yourselves, by the case of a bodily motion. Suppose your bodies had the power of bodily motion in them, without the power of rest: O! what a miserable thing were man, in respect of his bodily frame and constitution! to be in an everlasting hurry: he can move, and he must move, perpetually; but he cannot *sistere se*, cannot stop his motion, he can never take any rest. It is just so with the unregenerate soul. God is the true rest of the soul. It is in perpetual motion, in continual desires, in everlasting cravings; but hath nothing by which it can satisfy itself. It never comes into its mind, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." Such a creature, one would think, made for torment, that can everlastingly move, must be perpetually in motion, but can never rest, can never take up any rest in any thing that is agreeable and suitable to it, that can satisfy it.

LECTURE XXIX.*

It remains now, in the next place, to show,

Secondly, What those several evils and miseries are; and, so, what the spiritual death that is now upon the world, and hath passed over all, doth comprehend, and contain it it. It comprehends,

* Preached May 18th, 1691.

i. The loss of God. A mighty thing! the very thought whereof might set all our souls a trembling; and that, whether we consider it as our present case, or, as having been our case. The loss of God two ways: first, as men have lost all their interest in him; and secondly, as they have lost all inclinations towards him. A loss, that stands at once in God's aversion from them, and their aversion from God. A mutual aversion between God and them. But, because that, in every thing that belongs to our misery, we are first, as in every thing that belongs to our felicity, God is first, it is more proper to consider,

(i.) Our aversion from God, or, men's having lost God, through their own disinclination towards him: this is represented as the common case of the unconverted, or yet apostate world of men, yet remaining in the state of apostacy, that they are atheists in the world, Ephes. ii. 12. "Without God in the world;" so we truly enough render it. "Alienated from the life of God," Ephes. iv. 18. Alienated from the divine life, from a life of commerce with God; they are strangers to God, as men of another country: that is the significancy of the expression; so they carry it to God, (as it is elsewhere expressed,) like foreigners. He is none of our country; we are not of that country of which he is; we have nothing to do with him. At that rate men live, and bear themselves, generally, towards God.

And this aversion of the souls of men from God, is total, of the whole soul; the mind, the judgment, the will, the affections, they are all wholly off from God. So that, when he looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see who will inquire, who will seek after God; lo! they are all gone back; (all in a revolt, all flying away from him, to the utmost distance that they can;) there is none that doeth good, (not this good, it must be specially meant,) no, not one: as in the 14th and 53d Psalms, which are both to the same purpose; as divers passages quoted from them in the 3d of Romans. They are without God, and very well pleased with themselves that they are so. They know him not, and they all affect not to know him. They are "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, and the blindness of their hearts." That blindness of heart is a voluntary blindness; they are blind towards God, because they will not behold him, nor take notice of his majesty, though his hand he lifted up, though the appearance of him be never so bright and glorious. They forget him, he is not in all their thoughts. It is the usual character of a wicked, unconverted man, that he forgets God: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God;" the one expression being exegetical, or expository of the other, Psalm ix. 16. They refuse him, they are unwilling of him. If persons do remain in an unconverted state, though related to him as Israel was, (for yet of them it is said, "Israel would none of me," Psalm lxxxi. 11. "My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would none of me,") they will not God. We will not have him to be our God. It is a disaffecting of him; the affections that should be placed on him are quite off: in the room of pious affections, there is nothing else but enmity: "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

And, touching this aversion from God, it was formerly intimated, that, as love doth comprehend together, (as the radical virtual principle,) all our duty, and all our felicity; so doth this aversion from God, (which stands in opposition thereto,) all sin, and all misery. That this aversion is the radical principle of all sin; we spake to that formerly; and so we must understand it now, as it is the radical principle of misery, God being to be considered by us under a two-fold notion—as he is to be obeyed, and as he is to be enjoyed; as the Sovereign Authority, and as he is the Sovereign Good. It is the aversion from God, as he is the Sovereign Good, that we are now to consider, having, under the former head, of the sinfulness of man, spoken of it as an aversion to him under the notion of the Supreme Ruler, and, as the Highest Authority. But, yet, we have also told you, that there is a complication of these things with one another: for men do really sin against God in their declining the enjoyment of him, in their declining him as their best and highest Good; the constitution of the divine laws being such, that there are obligations upon us to be happy. So that, a man cannot but be miserable, as he cannot be happy without obeying him, even in this very enjoying of the best and highest Good, because God hath made this our duty, to place our supreme delight in him.

And so, God hath a just ground upon which to implead the ungodly, wicked world; for that, thereby, they make themselves miserable: "Why have you thus used my creatures, the souls that I have made? Why have you cut and torn them off from me, they which are the works of my hands? Why have you used and dealt with them so?" As was told you, he that is *felo de se*, is criminal by human constitution; for though he thereby doth afflict himself, destroy himself, yet he doth also injure the prince, and injure the community to which he belongs; for he destroys a subject and member of the commonwealth. And those who, by the law of their creation, should have joined with the rest of the creatures of their own order, in the eternal adoration and praises of God, have by sin, as much as in them lay, defrauded him, and maimed the community unto which they did originally and naturally appertain. But then, this misery, as it stands in the loss of God, includes, too,

(ii.) His just and righteous aversion from them. "God is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, neither can evil dwell with him." There can be no fellowship between light and darkness, between righteousness and unrighteousness. He did owe it to himself, to retire from an apostate, rebellious world: it was but to do himself right, to express a just detestation of the wickedness of a lapsed, degenerate world; to hide himself, to withhold his light and grace, which were shut up from men by the bar of an everlasting curse, till such time as that should be counterwrought, in reference to any; Christ having been made a curse for us, upon that account, that the blessing might come upon us, even us, Gentiles, as it did before upon the Jews, those of them that did belong to the election of grace: thereupon it is called "the blessing of Abraham;" that that might become a more diffusive thing, to reach the Gentiles too; to wit, receiving the Spirit, the promised Spirit, through faith, Gal. iii. 13, 14. Therefore, where this curse is not removed, it still lies as a bar against all gracious communications of light and influence from God to men. And so he is righteously averse from them, as they were most unrighteously averse to him; and thus they have lost God.

O! the lamentations that this world would be filled with every where, if this case were but understood! What girding with sackcloth would there be all the world over! God is gone! God is departed! This would be the common cry in town and country, in all parts and places—God is departed; that is the amazing thing! Heaven would resound with shrieks and cries from the miserable inhabitants of this earth. But, I say, that is the amazing thing, (as there will be occasion to take notice hereafter,) that such a matter as this, is so patiently borne, so little resented; that men can so quietly wear away their days here in this world, without God, and think themselves to stand in no need of him. They can rise in the morning without God; and walk about all the day long without God; and lie down at night without God; and yet, all is well.

ii. This spiritual misery contains in it, too, a wretched conversion of soul to the creature. Where God is lost, they design to repair that loss. And O! the miserable case of the inhabitants of this world upon this account; that they can think or imagine, when they want God, that any thing can fill up his room, and be to them instead of him! that it doth not come into their minds to consider, "How shall we recover God again?" but, "How shall we repair our loss another way?" imagining that something or other can be found, and may serve them, and be to them, instead of God! that is, that he, (in comparison of whom the whole creation is but "as the drop of a bucket, and the dust of the balance, lighter than nothing, and vanity itself,") that he can (I say) have his equivalent; that there may be somewhat found out of equivalent advantage and use to them. This is the highest reproach to the Deity, as it is the greatest misery to themselves, and both comprehended in one thought; to wit, that there may be an equivalent to make up the loss of God; that very thought, I say, carries in it the highest blasphemy against

the Deity, to think that any thing can fill up his room, and be as good as he is; as well as the greatest misery unto wretched souls themselves, that they should be under so fearful and pernicious a mistake.

But this is the common case when God is gone, and men are gone off from him, then they turn themselves to the creature: "Let us make the best of that we can." So is the project laid all the world over. Not, Let us consider how we may regain God; how we may get God back again to us; but, How we may supply his absence out of inferior things: and this is the general posture of mankind. Look on them, and in reference to God, they are in an averse posture; in reference to the creature, in a propense posture.

And what sort of creatures? That we may understand this to go somewhat towards the consummating of the state of misery man is fallen into, do but consider, I say, what is the kind of that good which they design for themselves, when God is no longer eyed by them as the Good that they should enjoy, and design for. And consider, too, in what circumstances they may expect to have what enjoyments they can have of that substituted good.

For the kind of it, we are to consider in the vast universe of creatures, what it is that the apostate world do seek to repair this loss of God to themselves out of. It is not out of the nobler parts of the creation; they do not look as high as the heavens, they are too remote; they are not the angelic being, that their thoughts fly upon; with any design of repairing the loss from among them. But the whole bent of their soul is directed towards this lower world, and sensible things, things meaner than themselves, meaner than their own minds. They think an intelligent, immortal mind must have its enjoyments, even unto felicity, in things of so vastly inferior dignity to a mind and spirit; that these minds are to be fed upon earth, upon ashes, upon the basest and most despicable things within the creation of God! What a misery is that! Unto such things it is that all this world is turned, being turned off from God, sensible things, earthly things, things that can please appetite, things common to them with the beasts that perish, only they have ways and arts to refine them, but they are of the same nature. As clay will be but clay still, be it figured never so curiously. "They mind earthly things;" this is the character of the insincere, those that are afar off from God, not turned to him; they mind earthly things; their whole souls are let out upon that which is in istelf vain, and a lie; that is, which promiseth fair, but never makes good, and so lies to them.

And consider, under what circumstances men apply themselves to enjoy the things by which they would repair to themselves the loss of God; especially consider these two most important circumstances; that is, that they are things that lie, first, under an interdict; and, secondly, under a curse, in reference to them, and in reference to what they design, and seek to themselves by them; to wit, a felicity; or with respect to the notion under which they do covet and would enjoy them; that is, as their best good, so they lie under an interdict and under a curse.

(i.) Under an interdict: "Love not the world, nor the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 5. What a misery this, that the poor souls, revolted and gone off from God, are now universally seeking a felicity for themselves in things that, under that notion, lie under an interdict, are forbidden to them, and cannot but be forbidden, under that notion; because, under that notion, they are made rivals unto the Deity. In subordination to God, men might comfortably have enjoyed the things of this world; not in competition, nor in opposition; for now this world is made his rival, and therefore, is the love of it idolatry, and is the setting up of another god, in opposition to the true and living God; and by taking this licence, men think to repair themselves for their having lost God. And,

(ii.) They are things that lie, not only under an interdict, but under a curse, a malediction,—apostate souls, gone from God, they can have no enjoyment of this world, but under a curse, nothing is blest to them; they can have no blessed enjoyment of them, or any thing they enjoy;—for sin turns all into gall and wormwood, bitterness and death. How dismal is the case with fallen man, upon this account! "Cursed in the basket, and cursed in the store; cursed in the city, and cursed in the field; cursed in the coming in, and cursed in the going out;" as the matter is largely and most emphatically represented in the 28th of Deut. A people, though related to God, when they go off from him, and so put themselves into the common state with the rest of the pagan world; a curse lies upon them in every thing that they do, in every thing that they enjoy; they perpetually live under a curse. It is with strange rhetoric that this matter is represented in the 109th Psalm: a curse that they are girt with perpetually, and that is as a garment that they are clothed with, and that flows or insinuates itself as oil into their bones, and as water into their bowels. So, they are under a divine curse, in reference to every thing that they enjoy. And that is a second part of this misery which fallen man lies under, even in reference to his spirit; to wit, that that is off from God, and is turned to a vain world, which is to him an interdicted and an accursed thing.

iii. This misery further includes in it, a continual unsatisfactoriness with whatsoever they do or can enjoy. And, as the essence of blessedness and felicity doth lie in satisfaction; so, on the other hand, must misery consist in continual unsatisfiedness, which results from these two things together; first, perpetual craving desires, and secondly, the want of any suitable and adequate object by which they may be satisfied.

(i.) In continual craving desires. And that is the common case with all men in the fallen state. Why, they have put themselves into an utter impossibility, whilst things are just with them as they are, to be happy; and yet they have a desire to be happy all this while, nothing being more deeply natural, than these two opposite things; a dread of misery, and a desire of felicity: and by how much the larger men's desires are, so much the greater is their misery in this case. Desires enlarged even as hell, and that could even swallow up a creation and more; for a creation was never to satisfy them. It was not a created, but an uncreated Good, that was the object designed for the satisfaction of the souls of men: "Who will show us any good?" There is the character of an unrenewed mind and spirit, in that Psalm iv. 6. But it never comes into their minds to think, what that Good is that could be adequate to them. "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us:" they never think of that, but still cry out, "Who will show us any good?" Roving, uncertain desires, which, with all, find that they can meet with nothing that is suitable and adequate for the satisfaction of them: these desires must turn to torment, when there is not an object for such desires to feed upon; they prey upon their subject, turn inward; and so men's desires are their tormentors, and make them miserable, in that they continually desire and crave that which they cannot reach. For,

(ii.) The other thing that concerns, and falls in, to make this a miserable case, or to render it a real misery, is, the want of a correspondent good for so vast and large an appetite; and that, upon a double account: to wit, that what would satisfy them they cannot desire; and, that which they do desire, cannot satisfy them. That which would satisfy, they cannot desire: God would satisfy them, he were an adequate, correspondent Good, to the most enlarged desire of the soul. Aye, but him they care not for; towards him they have no motion; towards him there is nothing but aversion and disinclination and disaffection, as you have heard before; so that, as the carnal mind cannot please him, so it cannot be pleased with him. And, that which they most of all desire, that cannot please them, as you have likewise heard.

And so, in reference thereunto, they lie always in the same restless posture. As, I remember, a heathen saith, concerning a soul loose from God: (it is the saying of Hierocles:) "That such a soul being loose from God, is like a cylinder upon a plain, that can never lie still; it is always in perpetual motion." The state of a soul that is off from God, is just such, circled all within itself, capable of setting upon no basis. There is nothing that can give a firm posture, or a posture of rest to it: for all things, beneath it, and beside it, are unsuitable, inadequate; and, therefore, nothing can ensue but perpetual unsatisfiedness. A miserable case! To have so capacious a thing, as the soul of man is, capable of so high and great enjoyments, and to

be under continual dissatisfaction, because that which would satisfy, it cannot desire; and that which it doth desire, cannot satisfy. And,

iv. This misery hath this further in it, a continual delusion, which the souls of men lie under, in reference to the objects of their enjoyment; a being continually imposed upon by the false and delusive appearances of things, so as, hereupon, they meet with disappointments, both in reference to what they attain, and in reference to what they attain not. Herein stands their perpetual delusion; that is, they are cheated into the expectation of meeting with that rest and satisfaction for themselves, which they can never find, and that, whether they do attain the things they seek, or attain them not.

The case is generally with men, in this respect, as with some weak, half-witted persons, who, looking about them here and there, they see some rising ground, such or such a hill, or mountain, and they think, if they were on the top of that mountain, they should reach heaven, for heaven seems to touch that; when, if they should be at the pains to travel to the top of that mountain, they should find themselves at the same distance they were before. So it is with the men of this world, with reference to what they expect from it, of good and rest to themselves: "O! I should be in a very heaven, if I were in a condition so high." Some men's states and conditions carry their appearance with them of very high lofty mountains, that do even over-top heaven, or touch heaven. "If I were but so high as such a man, or such a man, I were a happy man." Alas! they are deluded and disappointed, both these ways: first, that the most can never reach that which they do expect and design, in point of worldly advantage; and, secondly, that if they do, they are much what they were, as far from felicity as before:—nay, it may be, sunk by that very means, by which they thought to be raised, into deeper misery than before. This is a very dismal, yet it is the common, case! Men spend their days, wear away a wretched life-time, here, in this world, in pursuit of such an outward good state, or condition; and most of them always die short of what they designed, of what they projected in any such kind. And, if any have compassed this or that great design or project for this world; why, they are still, when they have compassed it, nothing the nearer. In a like case with that great prince, of whom we read, who, discoursing with one of his courtiers about several great designs that he had for this world, told him, he would move his arms against such a country, and such a country, and take in such a town and such a city: "Then," saith the courtier, "what will you do after that?" "Why, then I will carry my arms such and such a way." "And what then?" "Why, then I will labour to accomplish such a thing after that." "And what then, after that?" "Then I will sit still, and be quiet." "Why, sir," saith he, "you may as well do so now." Men might as well now sit still, and be quiet, when God hath given them some tolerable competency. And now, let me be thinking of and caring for a soul, and providing for an eternal well-being. But men think not of this, but let their lives run to waste, in a continual pursuit of shadows, and are in a continual delusion, with reference to what they attain, and what they attain not. In reference to what they do not attain; for that it would not satisfy: and, then, with reference to what they do attain; for they thought they should be much better for it, when, it may be, they are much the worse.

LECTURE XXX.*

Our business hath lately been, and still is, to represent the common miseries of man, which are all comprehended under the name of "death," very fitly, and very usually, not only in sacred language, but in other authors. Several particulars have been instanced in. And now, the next in order, which I designed to be more largely insisted on, is,

v. This misery stands in slavery, in that base and ignoble servitude, which the generality of men, in the state of apostacy, are subject to: a thing which will but slowly enter into the minds of those who have not been instructed, and considered well the matter afresh; that is, that the generality of men, in their state of apostacy from God, are become the meanest and basest sort of slaves; and, that is fitly enough called—"death;" (as I have told you, death must be taken here, not formally, but, in a large and comprehensive sense;) men of more ingenuous minds, rather choosing death than slavery; as it hath been with all those more noble-spirited men, who thought their lives laudably sacrificed for the liberty of their country, to redeem it from slavery; and, thereby, showed themselves, that they did scorn to live as slaves, with the rest; they thought death a more eligible thing; and so, could say as he did, dying, (though nothing else was effected,) "I have done this one noble thing; that I have chosen to die, rather than live as a slave." It is a misery much worse than that which goes commonly among us under the name of death, to be a slave.

But, if the matter be narrowly inspected, and looked into, every one that understands himself, and what the nature of man is, especially as to that part of man which, more deservedly, bears that name, (the mind is the man,) he cannot, upon reflection, but consider the state of slavery as the common state,—the life, and strength, and faculties, and powers of a reasonable, intelligent mind and spirit, being generally subject to things beneath and below the dignity of their nature; this is to be very basely servile. But this is that which they will very hardly think to be so, who do consider that they live according to their own wills, which, indeed, is the vulgar notion of liberty. He is a freeman: *Liber est qui vivit vult*—He lives as he affects to live, as he chooseth to live. Why, sure it cannot be that this man chooseth to be a slave.

But, there cannot be a more mistaken notion than this; or, that will more easily (if the matter be considered) prove itself false. For by how much the more the will of a man is inclined and led to choose things that are mean, and base, and unworthy of a man, so much the worse slave he is; when he is cheated into a consent unto that which debaseth him, and makes him mean; when he is fraudulently imposed upon, against all rational dictates and sentiments. And, undoubtedly, it was but that vulgar mistake, (not peculiar to the Jews, but common to sinners, as such, unto the world of mankind, yet in a state of apostacy, or not recovered out of it,) that our Lord animadverts upon, in that John viii. in several verses, where he is dealing with that people, who were his immediate auditors, upon this very topic; that is, he promiseth them liberty: "If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." But they tell him, with disdain, "We were never in bondage to any man; we are Abraham's seed." He replies upon them, "Whosoever commits sin, is the servant of sin;" and, being the servant of sin, is the slave of the devil too; and so much more miserably, and so much the worse he is so, by how much the more naturally, and according to inclination, he is so: for, when that is the case, when such appear to be the devil's own seed, his offspring, considering themselves not naturally, but morally, according to their inclination, with reference to the practice of duty, and with reference to consequent or connexed felicity; they are so far acted upon by that impure, apostate spirit, as that they do appear to be his very progeny, begotten of him. And so is this whole world divided into those two great families—the children of God, and the children of the devil. "Herein are the children of God, and the children of the devil, manifest," as the same apostle, in his 3d chapter of his 1st epistle, tells us. And so our Saviour speaks correspondently hereunto, to these his present hearers, in the 44th verse of that John viii. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do." And, therefore, is that very suitable to this purpose, (which I have taken notice of formerly,) what Austin observed out of a heathen moralist: "That it is a far more miserable thing to will that which is unjust, than not to obtain that which one willeth." It is so in the very reason of the thing. If men could make themselves masters of all that they covet, during their abode in this lower world; if they

* Preached May 29th, 1694.

could have every thing in their possession and power that they cast a fond eye upon, or place an irrational wish upon, they were a great deal more miserable, even in being left so to wish, so to desire, so ineptly, so foolishly. And, therefore, that kind of liberty, which stands only in gratifying inordinate and enormous desires, it is no other kind of liberty than that which God threatens the Jews with; a liberty to perish; a liberty for the sword, and famine, and pestilence: "I thus manumit you; I give you that sort of freedom, to run on in those ways, which shall infer upon you the most miserable end; that shall lead you into tragedies and death, which way soever you tread your foot, or cast your eyes."

And, therefore, what a noted author among the pagans saith, concerning one particular people, may be said concerning mankind, while they remain in the state of apostacy, and, antecedently to their recovery, that they are such as, *Quos decuit esse servos*, a state of servitude is so suitable to them, that it befits them to be nothing else but slaves. And so much the rather because it is that which they themselves choose. And do not think Scripture speaks ineptly, or unsuitably to the case, when it bids them that are recovered out of the common misery, that lay upon the world, to consider what they were before: "Ye were sometimes foolish, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," Titus iii. 3. It is that which men, recovered to a right mind, would look upon with the greatest disdain imaginable; to wit, that a reasonable, intelligent spirit should only employ itself, its noble faculties and powers, from day to day, in pursuing a design, how to serve and gratify a thing no better, or no worthier of a high state and station in the creation of God, than a brute creature. Nay, not so worthy; because those creatures are what they are by no degeneracy. They were never better, never higher: but, if a man be in the condition of a brute, he comes to be so by a lapse, by a fall, by a depravation; he is sunk beneath himself, he hath lost a good that he was capable of, and a perfection belonging to his own nature, that was the glory thereof; and, this he hath exchanged for the basest and vilest sort of slavery. The apostle Peter, 2 Epist. i. 19. tells us, "That while men promise themselves liberty, they themselves become servants of corruption;" for, of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage; and to be in bondage to corruption, is the vilest kind of servitude that can be thought. We can form no idea in our minds of so base a vassalage as this,—to be servants to brutal and unreasonable appetitions and desires.

Man being by the constitution of his own nature a reasonable creature, to have that very reason of his depressed into a subserviency to what is unreasonable, is, in itself, a real misery, whatever the common estimate concerning it may be; and whatsoever that is now, undoubtedly it will, within a very little while, cease to be what it is. They that glory in their fetters, that please themselves in being such slaves, in being "led captive by Satan at his will," they will shortly, very soon, (though not soon enough it may be,) change their minds. It is much to be feared that many may not change soon enough; but it will be very soon however: for how soon is the life of a man run out! and then the vain dream ends in the horror of an awakened soul; then it sees what it feels, and what estate it hath, by its own wilful choice, declined, and what it did addict itself unto, against the common sentiments and dictates which were not alien from them all that while, but only were not attended to. They were not at leisure to commune with themselves, and to consider what their own thoughts would suggest; and their misery is not the less for their having been under mistakes concerning this whole business all this while, when that mistake will be so soon detected, and they cannot be of that false opinion always. Indeed, we might admit, that happiness and misery stood always in opinion, if that opinion would always last: but when we are sure it will not, but that men will quickly alter their minds, as soon as their course is run out, then that will be found to be real misery before, which becomes now to be only misery apprehended. But again,

vi. A further thing wherein this misery lies, even that of men's minds, is the continual infatuation under which man, in his state of apostacy, is every where: and it is this that betrays him into that slavery which we have been now discoursing of. He is a slave, because he is a fool: he is fooled into the slavery which he so patiently undergoes. So you find these things connected in that Titus iii. 3. "We were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures." And (as I have heretofore had occasion to note) that Greek word which we render "foolish," as if it signified only the being without a right mind, it signifies more; it signifies being put out of a right mind. It is not being without a mind, for so is a stock and a stone, which were never capable of any such thing; but that word signifies being disminded, or having lost one's mind in the use of it: "I have a mind, but I have been never the better for it, I have not known how to employ it:" and this comes in immediate connexion with serving divers lusts and pleasures; men having been so mean and so base servants and slaves, because they were fools before; foolish, deceived, easily suffering themselves to be imposed upon; mocked, shamed into foolish expectations of felicity, where there is no such thing: so that in the very pursuit they still sink themselves lower and lower in miseries and death.

And hence it is, that that language is so usual in Scripture, of signifying a wicked man by the name of "a fool," as nothing is more familiar in the whole book of Proverbs, and sundry texts besides. Nor, indeed, is that sort of expression peculiar to the Scripture. Nothing hath been more usual among some of your more noted pagan moralists, than by the name of *sapiens*, a wise man, to denote a virtuous man, a good man. A good man is dignified with the name of a wise man; then the opposite hereto is obvious, that every evil man, every vicious man, is a fool: for it is not said of this or that person, more signally stupid or wicked, that he hath said in his heart, (as a fool,) "There is no God." But that, (as you see in the 14th and 53d Psalms, which are congenerous, and have almost the same passages in the former verses of the one and the other,) by that name is meant apostate man, in his state of apostacy. And so it is the general character of all men, yet remaining in that estate, and antecedently to their reduction and recovery out of it: "The fool hath said in his heart," not that there is no God, that is not the text, but—"no God," reckoning it to be rather the matter of their wish, than their assertion: it is capable of being understood in the optative, not in the indicative form; not as if they did say, "There is no God:" but, "O! that there were none;" the fool hath said in his heart, "Would there were no God."

And who those fools are, you see in what follows: God looks down from heaven on the children of men to see if there were any that did good, any that did seek after God; but they are all gone out of the way, all gone back, all in a universal revolt; none doing this good; to wit, not inquiring, not seeking after God, but all agreeing in the same wish: "O! that there were none; O! that there were no Ruler, no Lord over us; none to concern himself in any of our affairs; none to animadvert on our way and course, and to call us to account." Whereupon, nothing is more manifest than that according to the import of this scripture, the universality of apostate mankind lies under this character of folly. And somewhat it doth suppose, and somewhat it more formally includes. That which it supposeth is ignorance, the want of right notions of things; those men have in their minds, are generally false: but somewhat it more formally includes, and that is, the inefficacy of those notions which they have. And this is folly more formally, and which stands in an immediate connexion with misery, or rather, more naturally inclusive of it.

In reference to things of principal concernment to men, they are not so generally ignorant as they are foolish; ignorance consisting in the not having of right notions, but folly consisting in the inefficacy of those that are right, in opposition to governing wisdom; that practical wisdom by which a man must steer his course, and walk agreeably and consistently unto that light and knowledge which he hath. And herein lies the common prevailing folly of this world; that in things wherein men have knowledge, they corrupt themselves, and their "foolish heart is darkened," as the expression is, Rom. i. 21. upon account whereof it is that God doth give them up, for their contending against

the light and knowledge which they have, unto those brutish sensualities, as that they should do things that are not convenient, things very disagreeable to the nature of man, to the dignity of a human, reasonable creature.

And so, also, the light which men have, is called "darkness," by equivalence; that is, it signifies no more to the proper purpose of light, to steer and conduct a man's way and course, than if it were real darkness. And so, if you will allow our blessed Lord to be a Judge and Master to us of such propriety of speech, you must acknowledge that to be a very proper expression, that the light that is in man's unconverted mind, is darkness. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matt. vi. 23. That is, it answers no purpose of light, it serves for no such purpose as light is designed for, to guide a man in his way: they have such and such notions; but they do in their constant course run counter to them; and this is not ignorance, but folly, that they prevaricate with their own light, that they should know they ought to do so and so, and so and so they ought to choose; but they do choose and do quite the contrary.

And hence it is (which is the very *acme* of a man's misery; that is, the misery of his mind and spirit) his misery in this respect, that he is, by this means, made a bundle of contradictions and inconsistencies. And so hath nothing but confusion within him; or is in a continual war with himself; and there is no accord, no agreement, between his most rational sentiments and resolutions, and his consequent way and course: for if a man did sit down and deliberate but in the morning of any day, "How ought I to spend this day? ought I to employ it in following the inclinations of the man, or of the brute?" Certainly, he would think it more worthy of him to act like the man this day, than to employ the day, or his thinking, manly powers, only in pursuing the inclination of the brute. But then, if in fact he do run counter to any such sentiments as these, it is not because he is ignorant, but because he plays the fool. He hath not that wisdom that he ought, to govern his way, and to act suitably unto the clearest and most rational apprehensions of things. And so he is made up of nothing but inconsistencies with himself, or incoherencies, which show him to be a miserable creature. For what! do we think, did God make him such, (with such a mind that equals him with the angels of God,) to be employed in serving such desires, and pursuing such designs, as puts him below a brute?

vii. And a further thing in this state of misery, is the ignominy that men are hereby drawing upon themselves. And there is no man that considers, but will acknowledge that just ignominy is a misery, ignominy truly and justly so accounted. "Sin (we are told) is the reproach of any people." And then it must be as much the reproach of any person: as in that Prov. xiv. 24. every one accounts him a miserable man who is universally despised by every one, especially by the wisest and best of men. And suppose all mankind were, without a recovery, in that state of misery together, so that none must be found wiser or better than another, that could not at all mend the matter, with any of the individuals; as if it were not misery, because amongst men, none thought this to be misery, or none thought it to be truly ignominious. For we are to consider that we have other spectators, besides men, that are more capable of judging.

It signifies little to any man, what he thinks of himself, or what others think of him, in comparison of what is thought of him by him who is wisdom itself, and whose judgment of things never erreth. It is not what man thinks of himself, or commends himself for, but what the Lord commends, that is approved. And our Lord Jesus Christ is peculiarly called by the name of "wisdom;" it is his common style and character. And we must suppose him greatly to concern himself about the affairs of a world, whereof he is the immediate Creator. "All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made." And therefore, that he hath a continual inspection (if he had not taken the Redeemer's part) upon this world. He is said to be "the image of the invisible God, and the first begetter of all creatures," and that fitly enough (as that title fitly enough admits to be read) for "by him were all things made, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers."

And then, we consider ourselves in this lower world under the continual view and inspection of those nobler creatures, that are intended by those names, they cannot but apprehend our apostacy, and much more the continuance of it, to be very ignominious and reproachful unto this whole order of creatures, fallen from their rightful Lord, because accomplices with the other apostate spirits of their own order, who were fallen before. How might it cut and wound a man's heart, to think what the resentments of these wise, holy, and kind, and benign creatures (the glorious angels of God) are, concerning our common state here in this world! We having had the same Author and Parent of our being with them; he being "the Father of spirits." An appellation equally agreeing to them, and to us, and not more to them than to us. To think that a world of such creatures, the progeny and offspring of the same Father, (the Father of spirits,) should be fallen to such a low pitch of misery and wretchedness, as they generally are; why sure they cannot but look upon our state and case to be most miserably ignominious and reproachful.

And therefore, they that continue in the apostacy, and are never recovered in this world, when they come to rise from the dead, they are said to "rise to shame and everlasting contempt," Dan. xii. 2. One that was an apostate from God, and would never be recovered, he cannot but be had in everlasting contempt. And unto an ingenuous mind, and one that God hath recovered to his wits, in some measure, nothing hath a sharper pungency upon the mind than shame. And then, to be under everlasting shame, everlasting contempt, by those wise and holy creatures that were so full of kindness and benignity in their complexion towards men, and the spirits of men, upon account of their near affinity, being in so great a measure of one kind and nature with us, must be a great misery.

They that are recovered are called "angels," fellow-associates with God. That they should be the devil's fellows, followers of those wicked angels that were in rebellion against their rightful, sovereign Lord; and that, too, when they might have made a better association; overtures being made to them for their recovery and return; overtures being made to them of the most kind reception, though they were prodigals and rebels against their Father: this must leave them under everlasting shame and contempt: and every one looks upon them now (that is, every good angel doth) to be infamous, being sunk to so low a state of shame and misery; and any wise and good man would scorn to keep such a one company, think it a reproach to him to reckon any such among his associates: and this will be the common case of apostate creatures, ever eternally, to wit, such as are not recovered, that is, that they are abandoned to shame and everlasting contempt. And their own reflection, hereupon, must needs be the most sharp and tormenting thing that can be thought, to think what they are, and what they might have been, if they had not declined and refused to comply with so apt and suitable methods for their recovery. But further,

viii. It is another ingredient in the misery of the state of man in the apostate world, that they have such continual sharp resentments in their minds of the external evils that befall them here. They live in a world wherein they are continually liable to those evils which do first affect their sense; but not only of external evils, they become internal, and fill their minds and spirits with torment. Herein lies much of their misery, they comfort themselves in such and such present enjoyments, that are variable, mutable, and uncertain, which they have this hour, and are gone the next. They have this hour a delightful and joyful dwelling, and it is of a sudden turned into flames. They had the other day a rich and plentiful estate; it hath all of a sudden taken wings and is gone. Health turned into wasting sickness, ease into tormenting pain, all on a sudden. All these are very considerable as they terminate in the external sense: but as they enter into the mind, so they become inward evils, their minds are continually liable to anguish and torment by such events, and upon such accounts. And then,

ix. When it is so, they have no relief from God; for they

have not before known the way of addressing to him. Good men in their external calamities, have this refuge always ready. David, when he had lost his all at Ziklag, yet comforted himself in the Lord his God. His wives and family were all led captive by the Amalekites; his goods rifled; his house and city burnt with fire; that place that was left him for retirement, all rendered uninhabitable, on a sudden, by consuming flames; the people themselves, (the companions of his flight,) spake of stoning him: thus was he in the most deplorable case that could be; "But he encouraged himself (it is said) in the Lord his God." But men, in their apostacy from him, have none of this comfort, none of this relief; they have obstructed and shut up the way of address to God against their own souls; they know not how to apply themselves to him.

Such a case as that you have represented, Hab. iii. 17, 18. It was a very forlorn and distressed state, and a case, he supposeth, that "the fig tree did not blossom; that no fruit was in the vine; the labour of the olive did fail; the field did yield no fruit; and the flocks were cut off from the stall;" nothing but perishings: "yet," saith he, "I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." A most deplorable case it is, when, amidst whatsoever distresses a man hath, he hath no God to betake himself to, nor inclination to betake himself to God. Think of the distresses of Saul, (Sam. xxviii. 15.) as there he laments his own case: "The Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and giveth me no answer;" he could have no relief from God. It hath been the privilege of souls, that are returned to God, and come back to him, that when they are cast down under affliction, they could apprehend themselves not cast off: "They were in tribulation, but not in distress, afflicted, but not forsaken;" as 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. But men, in an apostacy from God, have no relief, they know not where or how to betake themselves: "They cry out because of the oppression of the mighty: but none saith, Where is God my Maker?" Job xxxv. 10. No, instead of that, they count him an enemy; and, there is really too much ground for it, while they persist, and go on in their wickedness.

And, these are heads that might further be insisted on, together with that general stupefaction, fitly called "death," or signified by the name of death, that possesseth the souls of the most in this present state; that, while in the midst of such miseries, they are so ingulphed, they feel them not, apprehend them not, or, at least, the worst, and most formidable part of that by which they are the most miserable;" the anger of the Lord preys upon them, as a consuming fire, and they know it not; it hath burnt them, yet they lay it not to heart," as the prophet expresseth it, Isa. lii. 25. And that, indeed, is a most calamitous case, and calls for deep lamentation; the inhabitants of this earth, generally, as in the suburbs of hell, (as we have no other notion of this world, than as a portal and introduction into the eternal state of blessedness, or misery,) and, that men should be so near perishing, having wrath to the uttermost coming upon them, and yet, so generally unconcerned. This is a like case to that of a lethargic body, that may be tossed and rolled hither and thither; you may, perhaps, cut it and wound it, but it feels not. As little sensible are the minds or spirits of men of this state of their case, of those miseries, by which they are now wretchedly miserable, and are in danger of being finally and eternally so.

With what lamentations might we bewail the case of apostate men, upon this account, would we but admit the thoughts of the common case to enter and sink into our minds and hearts. Men are so strangely habituated to misery, that it is now become their element, and natural to them: they can see themselves gradually sinking lower and lower into death, and might apprehend that consummate death was at hand, but they are not startled and amazed; no amazing thought has place in the minds of men, to awaken them, and make them bethink themselves, while it would be seasonable, and while any thing might be done towards their escape from the wrath which is to come: but they remain, generally, in that dead sleep, which binds up all their powers, and are like so to do, (if wonderful mercy prevent not,) till flames awaken them out of their pleasant dream. And now I add, further,

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LECTURE XXXI.*

x. THE consequent discomposure of the whole frame of man, I mean of the inward man, as the apostle distinguisheth of man, making him double, a man and a man; an outward man and an inward man, 2 Cor. iv. 16. Now for this inward man, there is a universal discomposure of the whole frame. They that will look upon what we insisted on before, but as a reputative evil, to wit, ignominy, must reckon this a most real one; that is, that that noble piece of workmanship, the inward man, is so marred, and spoiled, and discomposed throughout, and become a far more monstrous thing than any dislocations, or transpositions of the parts of these bodies of ours, can make them: though it would be easy to suppose it possible that men might be, as to the outward man, a most monstrous sort of creature, by the mere transposition of parts; yet, let any the most horrid metamorphosis of that kind you can think of be supposed, and, it is nothing to that discomposure of the frame of the inward man, that is to be found and observed in every yet apostate son of Adam, not converted, not returned to God, out of that state of apostacy.

For, as to what we have insisted on already, (that infatuation that is upon the minds of men every where,) consider, what must hereupon be consequent; that conductive governing light, that should lead men in the whole of their course, it is extinct, it is darkness, as our Saviour speaks in Matt. vi. 23. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" It is not said, concerning an unregenerate man, that he hath darkness, in him; but, that he himself is darkness, Eph. v. 8. "Ye were sometimes darkness;" their governing light was lost and gone, and then, what must become of the man? What is the state and frame of the inward man hereupon? Why you are to consider, (that light being supposed,) what was to be under its direction and government, in man, to wit, the inward man. There was his will, which was to be guided by that directing principle, but it is gone. And, there were all the passions of the soul, that were to have been moderated thereby, but, that being gone, the will is under no such guidance, the passions under no such moderation. What a horrid creature is man, hereupon, become, in the complexion of his soul, and inward man!

For his will, that is naturally wont to be called *cæca potentia*, an unseeing faculty; why, admit that it were properly to be so called, according to the natural constitution and frame in man, it was yet to be guided by a faculty that could see, by a seeing mind; but now, when an unseeing will is to be guided also by an unseeing mind, the blind is to lead the blind, (to allude to that of our Saviour,) what will become of this, but a being plunged into the ditch? This is the common case with man; that will of his, which is the commanding faculty in the soul of man, comes to be itself under the conduct of no reason, an unreasonable will. O! what a fearful case is this, when, yet, it is most manifestly the common case.

For, do but ask, What is the object of that faculty, that we call the *will*, in man? It is primarily his end, that is the object of it; that is, good; for good and end are wont to be taken for convertible terms; the means are only good by the goodness of the end. Now, when a man wills his end unreasonably, without the ducture or guidance of any seeing, discerning principle; and, to think of a man acting accordingly, shaping his course accordingly, and, to think of all men doing so, what a monstrous deformity is this of that noble creature; though it be true, indeed, that many are found to act rationally; that is, indeed, willily and subtlely enough in the pursuit of such and such ends that they do design; but yet, it is plain, they do, universally, mistake their end itself, and so the whole life of man can be nothing else but a continual error: "They do always err in their hearts, not having known my ways." What doth

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it signify, that a man can pursue such and such ends, with courage and dexterity; but these ends themselves, either he may gain them, or he may gain them not? Many times he never gains them; but, if he doth gain them, they are worth nothing. Why, here is a life lost, thrown away by the very complexion of the inward man; this he is inclined to do, to take such a course, as by which his whole life is lost, and thrown away.

A thing that that pagan moralist most aptly animadverts upon, when he saith, "Men are very shy of destroying their lives all at once, losing their lives altogether; but they make no difficulty of losing them all by parts;" that is, this day of my life I pursue an end, that is worth nothing; and I do so to-morrow, and the next day, and so from year to year, as long as my life lasts. Here is a life quite thrown away; and a man is led to it by the inward complexion and temper of his soul, as he hath mis-made himself, mis-shaped himself; for he was made upright, but he would be trying inventions, and this it hath come to. This is plain and evident concerning all the world of apostate, unrenewed men; that whereas their will is the commanding, governing principle of their lives, it doth command *nulla ratione*, it universally commands without reason, and so must signify as much of misery to a man, as if his eyes were out, and he among pits and precipices, where he cannot do so much as set a foot, without danger of perishing presently.

It is plain, the minds of men, as they lie under the direction of such a misguided will, they are conducted by no rational principle at all, upon this ground, that it is the end which is the principal object of every one's will. But they are universally out as to their end, running a quite counter-course to what they should, through the whole course of their time; so that, in this respect, the apostate, unregenerate man, is *natus ad miseriam*, he is wholly framed unto misery; and to nothing else but to misery. It is true, men have generally some practical notions of truth, that is, notions of truth about practical matters, that should be the principal things. They have generally some apprehensions of God, some apprehensions of a future state, some apprehensions of the immortality of their souls; but these notions are too weak and debile to do the office of principles. They do not do the office of principles, in that nobody steers his course, (antecedently to regenerating grace,) pursuant to any such principles. And if you would reduce the determination of men's wills to any principles at all, they can agree to no other principles than such as these; (though they should more generally disclaim and disavow them, yet they are apt to be governed by them, and no other;) that is, that a man is made for himself; that he is his own end; that he that hath made him, hath no right to rule him; that from him, from whom he hath received his being, he is not to expect blessedness; but that he is to seek it in inferior things, things inferior to himself; that time is far more considerable and valuable than eternity; that mortal flesh is far more valuable than the immortal spirit. The actual resolutions and determinations of men's wills which do govern their course, and according to which they lead their lives, do only square with such principles as these; though, when they are made explicit, they would be ashamed of them, and say they own no such principles; yet they own them most expressly as they can, as emphatically as they can. For a whole course of actions is a far more speaking thing than words can be: words do only express a man's present sense, the present sense of mind; but a series and course of actions do speak his constant and continued sense.

And O! what a miserable creature is man, upon this account, when the habitual complexion of his soul leads him through his whole course, all his days, all his lifetime, but to pursue shadows and lying vanities; and at length to lie down in sorrow, hopeless, endless sorrow.

And as the will is the so misguided thing, so the principle is wanting, too, that should moderate the passions.

And what a hell do they create in every man to himself, or make him to himself. Every one, if he would but consider and reflect, might be so far a preacher to himself upon this theme, as to save me or any man the labour of representing this case—"What a miserable condition the soul of man must be in, being the seat of so many passions, all left destitute of the conduct and government of any rational principles that should conduct them aright." Unreasonable desires, what a hell must they make! desires either after that which cannot be had, or which is not worth the having; either what is unattainable, or will do me no good; or I shall be never the better if I do attain them. To have any soul the continual seat and subject of such desires, and of no better, what a fearful case is this!

His delights, themselves, (though that may seem a paradox,) they are most fatal to him, and contribute as much (nay it may be more) to his misery, as his desires; because they detain him, they put a stop to him; they divert his course. Delight is the *quies appetitus in appetibili*, it is that by which the soul takes up its end, and is at a stop: but in what? in the enjoyment of wind and vanity, that is unsatisfying, very unsatisfactory. It is detained and diverted, it is withheld, by these, from pursuing what would do it any good, or contribute to its true felicity; "The woman that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth." Do you think it is not as true in the other sex? whoever lives immersed in sensual delights and pleasures, they are dead while they live. It is but a dying life that they live.

And their very hopes make them miserable; they are miserable by their own hopes, continually reaching out after that they can never compass; or if they do, still they do but fill themselves with the east wind. Hope is the spring of endeavours; for no man will endeavour for what he is hopeless of. But they do but labour for the wind in all that they endeavour, and possess and reap the east wind; that is all that they can reach to.

Their good things will often run cross to them; and then how doth that passion of anger corrode and tear them! what a rack is there in the soul upon this account especially when it works up as high as malice against men! men that they do an injury to, if it arise to envy, that most unreasonable passion; that I would rather be miserable because another appears nearer to happiness, in my apprehension, than I; he enjoyeth what is better, or he is better than myself, therefore I will be miserable; that is, I will be envious.

Add to this, the meditation and study of revenge, whether for real or apprehended wrong done to me. It is the most cutting, wounding revenge, that every man takes upon himself. "Such a one, I think, hath hurt me, done me harm, I will revenge it upon myself:" for it is the person himself that feels it most of all; (if he have any sense left in him;) it makes him a continual hell in himself. It makes him a devil to himself, as he would be to another man. It may be he misseth that; but as to himself he doth not miss it.

And as to his griefs, unreasonable griefs, what a deluge of misery are they! when men lament and mourn about things unreasonably, beyond proportion, (as every unrenewed man is apt to do,) he doth deluge himself with those sorrows: and his fears, by which he is continually prophesying dismal things to himself, what a miserable creature do they make him!

And all now upon this one account, all the things of this kind, do meet in this one juncture, in this one point; to wit, that there is no right mind to lead a man: that principle that was originally to have been conductive of his course, is gone, and it can never be supplied but by the Spirit of wisdom and holiness from above: while that is yet withheld and wanting to him, what is it that doth govern in the man? It is the spirit of this world, as it is called: "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God." Every unregenerate man, he is in his spirit under the government of the spirit of this world, one common genius which adapts and attempers men in their habitual frame into this world, unto this lower sphere. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." The contest lies between spirit and spirit: as to what part God hath in this world, and as to what part the devil hath in this world. If the spirit of this world doth govern in any one, and be the ruling principle in him, that unites him with this world; and upon that, all his appetitions, and all the various motions and passions of his soul, are determined, and confined to this present world, this sensible world; he is linked to that in spirit, he hath

a spiritual, vital union only with this world, and so feels all the pangs, all the paroxysms, that, in this lower region, he is subject to: he is always shaken with this shaking world, and tossed and hurried, hither and thither, as that is.

What a miserable creature must apostate man be, upon this account! This world being become such a region of death and of misery, the spirit of this world plungeth and ingulfs him in all that misery, makes him a continual partaker in it, as that wherewith he only hath a vital union. That Spirit that is of God, would unite him with the other world, and attemper him to that which the power of that Spirit (when this world is grievous and troublesome to him) might ascend and go up, and have his way above, (as the way of the wise is,) to depart from hell beneath; but, the spirit of this world entangles him, insnares him, fixeth him in that gulf, that he cannot ascend; can be carried out of this world by no thought, no vivid desire, no hopes upwards; his all lies here.

And that which is yet more tremendous in this case, is, his continual unwillingness, and dread of leaving this world; that fear, to wit, the fear of death. What a miserable creature must that make him, to be under the continual expectation of what he knows is inevitable, and he cannot escape; so that his only remedy in this is not to think of it! His relief must be to unteach himself, his own nature; that is, whereas he is naturally a thinking thing, he is to stifle such thoughts as are proper and suitable to the state of his case. All his care must be to make himself not think of that, than which no thought can be more proper and suitable to him. For, when I do certainly know that I am, as to this present world, this present state, a mortal creature, I should, therefore, bethink myself, with all the seriousness and concern imaginable, What shall come next? I dwell in an earthly tabernacle, which I know must come down, but I do not know, when I shall dislodge, where to have another habitation. I cannot say, "I have a building with God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens:"—no; the spirit that governs me is the spirit of this world, and that confines me only to this world.

A man, in this case, is miserable among all his enjoyments, when he thinks it goes never so well with him; "I have what heart can wish for," as well as that fool in the Gospel propounded to himself, to have it with him, "I will say to my soul, Take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years;" upon this account he is pronounced a fool: "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee." And whereas, that is spoken with peculiar reference to a rich man, yet you must not confine it so; for our Saviour saith in the next words, "So it is with every man that layeth up treasure for himself, (designs treasures to himself on earth, as every man doth one way or other,) and is not rich towards God." "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." O! dreadful word, to a man that hath his all here! O the torture that such a man must be subjected to, (if he thinks, if he considers,) that hath his all lying in this world, and yet, he knows he cannot stay here long: "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness."

This is so great a thing, that it is made one part of the design of the mediation of Christ, and his redemption, for which he became a man, and for which he took upon him flesh and blood, that he might be so: "that he might, by death, destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, (undo him as to his design and purpose,) and deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." To be under this unreasonable fear, what a dreadful thing is this! In this respect, it is to be called unreasonable, because, when a man finds that the thing is necessary and unavoidable, that he is afraid of, all wisdom would direct him to reconcile himself to necessity, and never to be at rest in his own spirit, till he finds that as he is to think of death with certainty, so he may think of it with complacency too; till, I say, he may upon good terms so do. And again,

xi. We are to consider, as to what is contained in this misery of man, that as (which I formerly told you) they have in all this no relief from God, so God hath a real displeasure towards this wretched creature in his present state; and if in his favour be life, in his disfavour is death: which way soever he turns, or what way soever he thinks of comforting himself, he is still under a *nemesis;* divine displeasure hangs over his head. "God is angry with the wicked every day. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. On the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup." While they continue wicked, and as such, that relates them to the divine wrath, constitutes them the proper subjects of it, upon which it preys as fire doth upon suitable fuel. And,

xii. They are not without some apprehensions hereof: misgiving they have in their own minds: there is a kind of gloominess and a dark shadow, that is cast by guilt over the soul and spirit of a man. He is not without some secret surmises, as men cannot rid themselves of all notions of God. A person that is habitually wicked, under the power of sin as a governing principle in him, cannot but apprehend him as an offended God; though his apprehensions be not so distinct, so formed, so explicit, yet such secret gnawings and corroding thoughts there will be, conscience accusing as well as excusing by turns, as it ought to be read: self-accusing thoughts do take turns in the soul. The writings of heathens are full of expressions, what the gnawings and tortures are of a guilty, misgiving conscience, of a self-accusing conscience. But, in the last place, which was mentioned the last time,

xiii. That which is the more common case, and is more fitly signified by the name of death, is, the stupefaction that more generally, and more ordinarily, takes place in the minds of men; that they are without feeling. Wrath is upon them, and they do not know it. Some more unformed thoughts they have, but not explicit and distinct ones such as might affect their hearts, and enter into their very souls: more generally their disease is a lethargy, without sense, and without feeling. And you know how sad the case may be in that respect, with the diseased body of a man. We do not reckon it the better when it can feel no pain, while the matter of the disease is present, and all the morbific matter remains. If it do not only endanger, but stupify, it is so much the more dangerous in common apprehension: and that is the case of the soul of an unrenewed, unregenerate man, that he can be tossed, and hurried, and torn, even by himself, by his own passions within him, this way and that way, and yet, he doth not reflect and think with himself, "I am a miserable creature;" but misery is become his element: where things do not *gravitare*, they do not lie with pressure, as nothing is pressed by being in its element. And misery is become so connatural to men, in this their present state, that misery is round about them, and they feel it not; the anger of God is preying upon them, consuming their souls, but they lay it not to heart, as in Isa. xlii. latter end, the expression is; divine anger is kindling upon this world, but they know it not; and destroying and consuming it, but they take it not to heart.

This is that death that is passed over all, as to the spiritual import of the expression, or, as it denotes the spiritual evils that do now infest the souls of men. But I would, before I had gone off from this head, have said somewhat by way of *Use* to this particular. And though I am prevented of saying much, yet, plain it is,

That whereas man, in this state of apostacy, is now a miserable creature, it may be gathered, from all that hath been said upon this head, that he generally mistakes the cause of his misery, and so, is as much likely to mistake the way and method of his cure. He little thinks his misery is a self-sprung thing, and, that he hath the fountain of it in himself. This will not enter into the minds of men. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," Prov. xiv. 14. That word, because it is rendered "backslider," may strike a wrong notion into the minds of many, as if, thereby, were meant an hypocritical pretender to religion, who hath apostatized, and made a defection: but, the word carries no notation at all of any other apostacy, than the common apostacy. And it is plain, that by "the backslider in heart" there, is meant the wicked man, in general, a sinner, in opposition to a righteous and good man, as, generally, the two parts of several verses up and down in this book, do distribute men into

good and bad, by one appellation or another. And, that is a proper expression, by which the bad is distinguished from the good man, in that verse: the word signifies perverse, froward; a fit character for a wicked man, an unconverted man; such a one "shall be filled with his own ways," as the good man is so satisfied from himself. The good man is not the first fountain of happiness to himself, but a subordinate one a good man is, and so is satisfied from himself. But the wicked man is the prime and first fountain of all misery to himself: and, therefore, when these wicked ones have any sense at all of their own miseries, they do create to every man a hell within himself.

But this is a thing least of all apprehended: men generally say, "What is the matter with me? what aileth me? I cannot be well, I cannot be quiet;" and, they would have this or that thing rectified, in their external circumstances, and they think that will do their business; but, alas! that will not do. They talk of flying from their misery, but that they cannot do, unless they could fly from themselves. I remember the moralist saith, "Go whither thou wilt, that intolerable companion (thyself) will go with thee, wheresoever thou flyest, and layest down thine head." Till thou art new-made, thou art self-made, for misery. God must new-make thee, if ever thou art happy. And, therefore, an amazing wonder it is, that men should so much mind things that are foreign to them, and never cast their eye upon themselves, or think how it is within. They are greatly concerned how affairs go in France, in Flanders, in Germany; but never think how it goes within. O! what a miserable world will it be, (it may be often said by such,) if that side prevail over the other side! What a miserable world will this be then! But men do thus think altogether amiss, and besides the purpose: what good will it do to me if so good men, and never so good a cause, prevail and prosper in the world, when I have my own hell within myself? I shall be a miserable creature still, till all be rectified within. It is not a new world, but being a new man, that can ease me, relieve me, and make me a happy creature.

It doth not lie in the power of all the world to make me a happy or miserable man. You may think, if such and such a party of men prevail, we are all undone, we shall be very miserable. But, I tell you, it will be in their power only to make you miserable, in whose power it is to make you ill men. If it be not in the power of any in all the world to make you ill men, they can never make you miserable men. If it were in the power of men, to pluck you off from God, to disaffect you to him, that you take no complacency in him, that you cannot love him, nor pour out your soul to him, this would make you miserable. But, it is not in the power of all this world to make any man miserable, that doth not make and keep himself wicked.

"And so death passed over all men."

LECTURE XXXII.*

You know our business upon these latter words hath been, more lately, to give an account of that death, which is said to have passed over all. And, therein, we proposed to consider it,

(1.) In its nature, in which respect it is common to all. And,

(2.) In its degrees, in respect whereof it admits of great difference, according to the several circumstances of men's states. We have been hitherto speaking to it upon the former account, and labouring to show you its ambitus and extent, of how vast a comprehension it is, what a mighty sum of misery it carries in it. That misery, we showed, must involve,

[1.] Bodily death, with all the tendencies and appurtenances (as I may say) thereunto. And then, we have more largely insisted,

[2.] In showing that here must be included in it, death spiritual, such as the souls of men are liable to, and susceptible of; death, not in the natural, but in the moral sense. In the former sense, souls cannot die, as is an agreed thing among all: and, in the moral sense, because morality doth comprehend both men's duty, and their felicity, we are not, (as was told you,) here, to consider it in opposition to the former of these; for so we spake to this death, as it falls under the head of sin, in that other clause of the verse; but, as it stands in opposition to felicity, and to the real blessedness of the souls of men. Or, (as was told you,) that aversion from God, which sums up all in point of evil; as a right propension towards him, or love to him, sums up all in point of good. That aversion from God, it may be either from him as the Sovereign Authority, and so it stands in opposition to our duty; or, as it is an aversion from him as the Sovereign Good, and, so it stands in opposition to our felicity. And so we considered spiritual death. And, it is called death (as hath been noted to you) in an equivalent sense, as that which serves not the end it was designed for, and so is all one as if it were not. When the souls of men will not serve the natural end to which such beings were originally designed, it is all one as if they were not. They are lost as to their proper end, both as they were to be serviceable to God, and as they were capable subjects of felicity for themselves; for, that double end was to be designed by them, though the one in subordination to the other.

Now, I go on in the next place,

[3.] To note further to you, that, under the name of "death," we may also understand that condemnation, which the whole apostate world lies under. This is a thing that, fitly enough, is to be conceived under the notion of this death, that is said to be "passed upon all." Whatsoever there is of present death upon this world, it lies under a doom to more, to that which I may say is more deadly, and more dreadful.

And I need not insist, in opening to you so obvious and so plain a thing to any one's understanding, how properly a condemned man may be said to be a dead man. A world under a doom unto a future misery, (besides all that is actually incumbent on it,) how properly, in that respect, death may be said to have passed over all! One that is under condemnation is dead in law; he hath no longer a legal title to his life. The law doth not further protect his life, is no longer a guardian to it; yea, and it doth not only withhold its protection, but doth direct its sword against such a one's life, and cut it off.

This is the common state of this world; it lies under a doom: besides all the actual miseries that are upon it, it is doomed to worse; "death hath passed over all;" but that death is in a continual tendency, (as being yet but begun,) to a consummate state of death. Death finished, is approaching; and men are, by the righteous judgment of God, led on, hurried on, towards the consummate state of misery or death, that is most righteously determined upon them. And this, the context can by no means allow us to overlook. It is inculcated again and again, in the 16th and 18th verses of this chapter, "that judgment is come upon all men to condemnation." This whole apostate world stands condemned by the righteous judgment of God. And so, as justification is, in a relative and respective sense, the life of the soul; so is condemnation the death of it. That passage, in the same context—"the justification of life," it carries that manifest import; and condemnation doth as truly carry death in it, as justification doth life.

Antecedently to that change which God makes in the state of men, condemnation is a thing belonging to them, as when such a change is made, in the state of any that are brought into union with Christ: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Romans viii. 1. But that tells us what the common state and case of the rest is; there is condemnation to them, they lie under a universal condemnation; they are, (as the apostle's most apt and emphatical expression is,) ὑπόδικοι, we render it, become guilty; the meaning is, impleadable before God, liable to be impleaded by law, in *jus vocari*, to be called to account. And, as the course that men have held, according to natural corrupt inclination, is unaccountable, so they are liable to be brought under judgment before the Lord.

* Preached June 22d, 1694.

This condemnation is to be understood to be as its opposite justification, either (as some fitly enough express the matter under those terms) constitutive, or sentential: either they are, by the constitution of the law, condemned, and that is to be condemned virtually, by that sentence which is written in the law, by which they are to be judged; or sententially, which is that condemnation that is to be pronounced upon them at the last by the mouth of their Judge. Justification is taken the same, two ways. A person may be said to be justified, either when the law doth constitute him just, or else there is a final justification, when he is pronounced or declared so, from the judgment-seat, by the mouth of the Supreme and Universal Judge.

It is in the former sense that the world lies under condemnation. As a person that hath violated and broken the law, by the commission of some capital crime, though he be not formally condemned, by the mouth of the judge, yet the law condemns him beforehand. And there must be the less difference in this case, *in foro divino*, than would be *in foro humano;* because the judgment of God will always, at last, pass according to the mind and intendment of the law, when many things may prevent its doing so in human judicatures: this is one sense wherein death is further said to have passed over all. All are under a general doom; their lives are actually forfeited; the forfeiture may be taken whenever God will. Men are at mercy, respited from the utmost of death, and by patience, (without promise,) as a condemned person may be executed whenever the prince pleaseth; there is no moment of time given to him; he can claim no addition to his life. Thus it is with all men. "So death hath passed over all." And lastly,

[4.] We are to consider within the compass and extent of this death, that eternal death itself, unto which this doom, this judgment, makes men liable and subject: and that hath actually passed upon as many as have died impenitent, and not reduced, not brought back to God, through the several thousands of years that are revolved and gone over this world already. And as to what remains of human generation, death may be said to have passed in that respect, even over all of them too, it being as sure that they will come into the depth of that death, as if they were plunged into it already,—supposing their continuing not reconciled, not reduced, not recovered, out of the common state of apostacy. Concerning that death, it doth more properly belong to another topic or place in theology; and therefore I shall not discourse of it here; only hint thus much concerning it, that it cannot differ in kind, and in the main substance, from that spiritual death, which we have spoken of already. As spiritual life doth not differ substantially from eternal life; so nor doth this spiritual death differ in substance from eternal death, any more than a child newly born doth differ in nature, or specifically, from a grown man. Spiritual life will grow up into eternal life. Spiritual death will grow up into death eternal. It will, hereafter, consist and lie in separation from God, and in subjection to his wrath; even as now it doth; the difference herein is only as to the degree, and as to duration and continuance. There is now a loss of God, as our best and most satisfying Good; and so there will be to all eternity. There is now a subjection to his displeasure, and various manifold impressions therefrom; there will be higher and fuller degrees hereafter. Both that which is called *pœna damni*, the *punishment of loss*, and that which is called *pœna sensus*, the *punishment of sense*, will have unspeakable, unconceivable additions hereafter. But there is the same thing in reality now, with every ungodly man, every one that is not reconciled to God. Though, by the way, I could never satisfy myself concerning the fulness of these terms, *pœni damni*, and *pœna sensus*, the punishment of loss, and the punishment of sense; for, undoubtedly, the former, the punishment of loss, is as sensible as the other, every whit; we do not know but that it may be more so. Souls will be eternally stung with their loss, as much as with any positive suffering: as a man may be as sensibly pained by hunger, as he may be by a dagger, that strikes him to the heart. But that only by the by.

These are the great things, that this same *death* in the text, which is said to "have passed over all," must be understood to comprehend and contain within the extent of it. And so far we have considered it but in its kind, wherein it is common to all. But if,

(2.) We should also consider it in its degrees, so there will be found to be great differences. It will not be in degree the same to all, but differ and vary, according to the very various circumstances of men's states, whether we consider the matter with reference to the natural tendency of things, or whether we consider it, with reference to the righteous judgment of God: both in nature and divine judgment, there must needs be great differences between the miseries of some, and of others. There is, in this present state, and there will be, no doubt, in the future state too, where all the subjects of wrath are called "vessels of wrath;" but those vessels are not all of the same capacity; some vessels will hold more than others do; and their capacity and measure hereafter, will be much according to what is here in this present state.

And, I shall only here hint, at some of the more obvious things that must difference the state of men, in point of that misery which hath deluged, and will deluge for ever, the apostate world. It hath different degrees of depth, as the ocean hath; which, though in some places we may suppose it a hundred fathom deep, and in other places not above two or three, yet, it is deep enough to drown all. So is this deluge of misery upon fallen mankind; though as to some deeper than it is as to others, yet, it is deep enough to drown all in misery and destruction. As the apostle's expression is, 1 Tim. vi. 9. But to name to you some things that more obviously do appear to difference the case of men's states, in point of misery, or that death which here is said to have passed over all. As,

[1.] There must needs be some difference, from the better or worse complexion of nature, that is to be found with some and with others; of which some heathens do fitly enough speak. There is such a thing as good nature in this world, obvious enough to the observation of every one, as there is ill nature, observable enough in others. These must make very great differences in the state of men's case, if we consider the matter according to the ducture and tendency of mere nature. So that, whereas the natures of some do render them less propense to vice, it is also possible, that, as they are less vicious, this will be one of the measures that they will hereafter be less miserable, but miserable still; and notwithstanding not being reconciled to God, being turned, renewed, changed, never made partakers of the divine nature.

But, if you consider the case morally, than the better natured any are, supposing that they do violence to that nature, they spoil that nature, and make it much worse; —then, I say, the better natured the more miserable; for they are undoubtedly the more guilty. Many well-tempered persons, of much ingenuity, of good disposition, that are not inclined to do ill things to other men; but they are continually propense to all acts of injustice towards God; him they will not know; from him they are habitually alienated; never look after reconciliation with him. It may be, when they were not naturally inclined, yet, they have taught themselves to be more grossly and sensibly vicious; and so have that way, and in that respect, spoiled a good nature; done, in that respect, continual violence to themselves; learned to be wicked, even beyond what they were inclined; here must be so much the deeper condemnation.

A thing, I am afraid, very little considered by parents, in reference to the children of their womb and loins, branches of themselves, whose tempers they make it their business to cultivate as they grow up. But, many parents have not only neglected this, but have made it their business to instil (as much as in them lay) vicious inclinations into them; or they have so managed matters towards them as to make them craspish, peevish, and froward, to imbitter their tempers, and to lay foundations betimes, both of present and everlasting misery, in their very tempers, in their spoiled, or not improved, tempers. Many parents might more mercifully, with more kindness, pluck out their children's eyes, and cut off their limbs, than indulge the vicious humours which appear in them betimes; and wherein is a foundation laid for their misery in this world,

as well as for future and eternal misery, when their tempers are so spoiled, as to be cross, peevish, froward, discontented, quarrelsome. Alas! much of this might have been qualified, and prevented, betimes. But in the mean time, that there is such a thing as better and worse nature, which may, in different respects, make present and future misery, more or less, is out of all question. But,

[2.] That which is more considerable, is, that they must be plunged deeper into this death, who live in sin to the last, unconverted to God, and unreduced under the Gospel, than they that never enjoyed a Gospel; this must make a vast difference in the states of men. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness more than light," John iii. 19. When the Gospel itself becomes deadly to men, that is a most terrible sort of death;—to die by a Gospel plague, is a most terrible way of dying! Death passed upon all, but it triumphs more, and with greater terror, over that part of the world where Gospel light shines, but is wickedly resisted, opposed, sinned against, and the design of it counterwrought; that is, as in that mentioned place it is expressed, "Men love darkness more than light;" the darkness better pleaseth them, is more grateful to them, as it gives them opportunity of being wicked still. The light offends men; they cannot endure (as it is in that context) to have their deeds brought to the light; resolved they are upon a course of wickedness. Where there is an honest, sincere mind, he affects light, runs into the light, that it may appear that his works are wrought in God, that the divine tincture and impress that is upon his works, may show itself, and appear. There is that in them, which is very agreeable and congruous to the light. But, when men have a resolution of being wicked, then they are for a corner. "There is no darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves:" that implies what they affect; they would have a shadow of death wherein to hide themselves; that which they covet is, "Where shall we be hid?" It is a night they seek, and a cloud; *nocte peccatur*. When there is a course of dispensation kept on foot towards men all their time, to keep them within the light, to hold them within the region and verge of Gospel light; this is that which they could wish extinct; "O! that this light were out." As they are brought speaking in that Isa. xxx. 1. "Cause the holy One of Israel to cease from before us. His bright and glorious appearances, they are ungrateful and unwelcome to us. O! who will take away God, and that divine light, that shines so much to our disturbance and annoyance; we wish it gone,"

But more tolerable will it be to Sodom and Gomorrah, to Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than to Capernaum and Bethsaida, (as our Saviour inculcates in the 11th Matt. 22. and onwards, when he upbraids those cities, where his wonderful works were done,) where there were so bright and glorious appearances of divine power, attesting and bearing witness to that truth which he came to publish to the world. O! wo, wo to them, among whom there have been such glorious appearances of God, but counter-striven and resisted. Though there will be one common hell to all in time, yet, the hell of Sodom and Gomorrah will be a more tolerable hell than theirs. And again,

The case must, in point of misery, be worse with them who, living under the Gospel, had a better parentage, were born of godly parents, than with others with whom it was not so. And that upon a double account;—because that such would certainly devote them to God; and—as they would be more intent upon educating them for God. Here come in very great differences in the case of such, from the more common case.

First, I say, they that were born of religious parents, those parents would, by conscience of duty, be obliged and urged to devote them to God; to take care that those great and venerable names, the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Ghost, should, according to divine appointment, be early named upon them, to signify whose they were, and to whom they did belong. But they afterwards, when they are grown up, refuse to stand to that covenant, according to the tenor whereof so early a dedication was made of them. "We will not have our parents' God to be our God." Thy friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not. A horrid thing that were: but how horrid to forsake our God, and our father's God! When man's case shall, in this respect, be brought into judgment at the last day—Thou wast born of such and such parents, that recognised God's right of thee betimes; for it is only a recognition of God's right. It is not the creation of any right to him, nothing can be given him that was not his before, but only a recognising his right, and this hath been done with solemnity. "But thou, when thou wast grown up, wouldst not stand to the covenant of thy father; thy father's God should not be thy God." How much more dreadful must be the case of such, than that of pagans, in the grossest darkness! And again,

Secondly, Such parents must be supposed to have educated them for God, pursuantly to their having devoted them to him. But, alas! many in our days have counted it a glory to have broken loose out of the fetters of a pious education; to have thrown them off, torn their bonds, as Samson did his withes and cords: and therein they think they have showed themselves mighty men; that this was a great piece of fortitude and courage, to outface God and heaven; and to bend themselves to a course of wickedness, in opposition to whatsoever of good principles were endeavoured to be implanted; that is, principles of truth, which were laboured to be infused and inlaid into their minds; and of practical truth, such as might have a tendency to form and govern their practice. Their godly parents did, no doubt, charge their own consciences with duty, in this kind, to teach their children the train of their ways betimes, that "when they were old they might not depart from them." But as for such as have formed their way, and broken loose, undoubtedly the child of a pagan, though it perish, yet perisheth under less guilt than such. And,

[4.] There cannot but be great differences, too, according as among those that live under the Gospel; some have lived under a more powerful ministry than others: where the same Gospel for substance is preached, it cannot but be acknowledged, that it is preached by some more convictively, with more pungency, and with greater aptitude to do good, than others: many are more closely urged, and dealt withal, from time to time, in the ministry of the word, than others are. And, according as men's case may differ in this respect, so will this death, that passeth on them, have more or less of deadliness in it. And (as was said) when the Gospel is "a savour of death," so as that men die of a Gospel plague, it is a fearful way of dying. But the savour of the Gospel, or the odour, rather, (as that word should be read,) is stronger, as it is diffused by some than by others. But if it prove deadly, by how much the stronger, by how much the more of efficacy, so much the more, may it be said, doth the death that ensueth partake of the horror of death. And again,

[5.] There cannot but be great difference, too, according as some do sin against greater convictions of conscience than others. Having more of internal light let into their minds, and which, therefore, they are put to have a closer contest and grapple; the case cannot but be so much the worse, unto how much the more of conviction men do oppose themselves in a wicked course; convinced, but yet, go on: convinced that they should turn to God, but never turn; that they should break off such wicked ways, but they persist in them; that they should engage in such and such ways of duty, but they decline them. That conscience which doth not govern, it doth judge, it doth doom, and doom so much the more heavily, by how much the more of resistance its tendency to govern meets with. And,

[6.] There must be deeper degrees of this misery and death, according as there have been stronger strivings of the Spirit of God; God still resisted and striven against. Where his Gospel is, there his Spirit will more or less, and in one kind or other, be at work; but it works at liberty God works in you "to will and to do of his own good pleasure." And I doubt the emphasis of that Scripture is not noted as it should be, and the correspondence of part to part in it, Phil. ii. 12, 13. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh (or is working) in you, to will and to do of his good pleasure." Work because he worketh. There is the sub-

stance of the precept enforced by that which we are to consider as substantial in the motive. Do you work, because he worketh. But then, there is a circumstance in the precept, unto which a circumstance in the motive doth also correspond: work you with fear and trembling. Why? because God works at will and pleasure, under no obligation, but may desist, may give off, when he will. Now then, he being at perfect liberty, under no bonds or tie, he may strive longer with some, than he doth with others: and, according as he doth longer continue to strive, or as he doth more earnestly plead, (but yet in a way short of victorious, all-conquering grace, which bears all down before it,) so, the guilt cannot but be the greater, that is incurred by continual resistance; and, they must needs sink themselves so much the deeper into misery and death: they that have some taste of the good word of God, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and the powers of the world to come, and yet sin themselves into such a state, as that their repentance becomes finally impossible. Perhaps, it may admit of a gentler meaning as to some; but that such an expression is used as admits of a latitude, there appears so much the more of divine wisdom in it. But it is plain, that many never do repent. By how much the more of vigorous efforts have been put forth upon them, without effect, so much the more, undoubtedly, must they finally incur of this misery, or sink the deeper into this death.

There is a sorer punishment, that is incurred by sinning against that Gospel, wherein that Spirit breathes, than could be by sinning against the law of Moses; as in that Heb. x. 28. and onward. "If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unclean thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" There lies the *acme* and height of the wickedness that appears in this case: that is, that Spirit is a Spirit of grace, that they have been contending and striving against; that Spirit of all goodness, and love, and kindness, and benignity: to have striven against that Spirit, to the last breath, of how much sorer punishment shall such be thought worthy? The sinning against one's own conscience, it is doing a violence to oneself, and to what God hath made superior and governing in us, did appoint it to be so. But this is a more immediate and direct affront to Heaven, when resistance is made to the Spirit of God himself, who insinuates, slides into the mind, repeats and inculcates from time to time; and still in vain. It is a fearful thing when men do engage in a continual war with their own consciences,—it is unnatural; and it is a great offence against God too. Heathens have thought so; as particularly Marcus Antoninus: "that warned men, if they would live well, they must live with God, and keep up a conversation with God, and that (saith he) we shall do, if we do not offer violence to and tear that vicarious God that is in us, which God hath set over every man to be the guide of his life." But when an affront is offered to God himself, the Supreme Good, (as I may say,) not to that vicarious God, but to the very Divine Throne: this is a fearful thing to do so. And so it is when men are continually fighting against that Spirit, that breathes in the Gospel. And,

[7.] I might add that, undoubtedly, men's guilt and misery must be greater and deeper, according as they do arrive to great pitches of sin. As such come more explicitly to hate every thing of goodness, to deride and scorn it, according to the gradations that are observable in the beginning of the first Psalm, they at length seat themselves in the scorner's chair; they that make it their business to ridicule religion or godliness; or they that sink themselves into deeper degrees of sensuality, why, according as the wickedness in which they wallow is fouler and grosser, so it cannot be but their misery must be the greater in which they involve themselves. And,

[8.] They must needs be in the worst case, in point of misery, that are more instrumental in spreading wickedness in the world; whose wickedness is more diffusive; who are mere partakers of other men's sins. There can be no such thing as supererogation, in point of merit, by good works; but, no doubt, there may be in point of demerit, by wicked works, according as men do draw in more accomplices, and do more join in a conspiracy against God and heaven. So much the more guilt, so much the more miserable must they be. And again,

[9.] Such as are wicked in public stations, they must proportionably be more guilty and more miserable; wicked magistrates and wicked ministers, according to the greater hurt that they do, or the less good that they do, being intrusted with such talents, or having such power, such opportunities improvable for good, put into their hands.

And lastly, *cæteris paribus*—They that live longer in sin, must sink deeper into death, supposing all things concur equally, the longer the worse. The sinner of a hundred years old, he is the more deeply and dreadfully accursed. As in that Isaiah lxv. 20. So we see there cannot but be different gradations, or graduate differences, in that death, which, in the kind and nature of it, is common to all.

This doth claim somewhat of general use, which I cannot insist on now; no subject can claim it more than this doth, to which we can apply, or turn ourselves, as you may hear afterwards.

LECTURE XXXIII.*

Use. We therefore come, in the last place, to improve what hath been said of this death, by way of application.

1. And we may learn, hence, inasmuch as death is said to have passed over all, for that all have sinned; that God is not unobservant of the ways of men in this world, nor indifferent how they demean themselves. Have all sinned? Death passed over all. They that think God hath forsaken the earth, concerns not himself in human affairs; why do they think so? It is true, the judgment-day and the state of retribution are not yet come. But, in the mean time, are there no tokens and indications upon men, of divine displeasure? Is there nothing to signify that he is not well pleased with a wicked world? Indeed, because his judgments are not executed with greater terror, therefore, many times, men's hearts are set in them to do evil. And if things run long on with them, after one manner, because they have no changes, they fear not God. But if they would use their understandings, which can go a greater compass than sense; and if they would look about, and not consider merely and abstractly what they themselves do now at present feel, but what appearances there may be perceived of divine displeasure towards this world in general, they may see by tokens express enough, that God is not well pleased with the state of things in this world, and with the course and carriage of men in it. They may see that his wrath "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; for how constantly is death every where following sin, death passing upon all men, for that all have sinned. When death is making, in a more sensible way, such spoils and havoc in this world, tumbling men into the dust every where, and none escapes—what! have men reason yet to think, that God is indifferent how they carry themselves? that he takes no notice whether men obey him, or disobey him? But again,

2. Since this is the very state of the case, death past upon all, or men are generally in a miserable state; we may collect, hence, that God's deportment towards men is very becoming of him, and most suitable to the state of their case. "Death hath passed over all, for that all have sinned." Nothing could be more worthy of God, than to let it be as it is with men, in this respect; that is, to let death pass over all; that it should spread its dark and horrid shadow over this world, as we find it every where doth. Nothing could, I say, be more worthy of God, or more suitable to the state and condition wherein sin hath constituted the sons of men. And this will appear yet more distinctly, whether we consider God's dispensation towards men, in this respect, for the present; or whether you consider again his determination concerning them for the future.

* Preached October 8th, 1694.

(1.) If we consider his dispensation towards them, for the present, nothing could be more becoming, more worthy of God, or more suitable to such a creature as man, now in his lapsed and apostate state. For, as to his present dispensation, you may find a concurrence of two things: first, such a severity, as wherein God doth most becomingly animadvert upon the sinfulness of the world, and show himself displeased; and secondly, such lenity, as by which he yet signifies himself placable and willing to be reconciled. Nothing could be more suitable, more becoming God, considering the present state of lapsed man, with respect to the tenor of his present dispensation towards him, than that there should be such a mixture as this of God's conduct towards this world: that is, severity, to show that he is not well pleased; lenity, to signify that he is yet placable. What could be more becoming God? Both these are interwoven in the whole course of God's dealings with men; as hath been told you. There have been tokens of severity, that men might understand and know that God doth not like their ways and manners. Death is every where playing its part, and rolling men into the grave before one another's eyes. And men may every where perceive the effects of a malediction upon themselves, and upon their concernments and affairs in this world. But yet, notwithstanding, there are significations, too, of God's placableness, his willingness to be reconciled, even where there is no Gospel, but much more where there is: where there is no Gospel, God leaves not himself without witness, in that he doth good, giving men rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness. And even his patience, and forbearance, and long-suffering, they have a leadingness, (as we have had occasion at large to show you,) unto repentance. And me will have a fearful account one day to make of it, that have not been led thereunto, nor understood that design.

But where the Gospel comes, there (you know) God shows himself as he is in Christ, "reconciling the world to himself, that sin might not be imputed," 2 Cor. v. 19. What can be more suitable than this to a Being of most absolute perfection, in whom the perfections of wisdom, and justice, and holiness, are in conjunction with the perfections of kindness, goodness, love, and favourable propensions towards his creatures: nor could any be more suitable to men in this their present state, (it being a state of probation,) a state of trial, of leading, and precedaneous to another state.

And, according to all the measures of wisdom and equity, this is always reckoned most suitable where there is guilt that appears chargeable, and that it may be charged; and that, while as yet a public judgment is not given, and hath not had its effect. If we do but consider, (and, indeed, we can but judge as men of things, and use the best understanding, as such, that we have,) we see how men do commonly judge in such and the like cases. That is, suppose one be vehemently suspected of some flagitious crime among men, but the matter is not yet brought to judgment; such a person is neither to be treated as an innocent person nor as a convicted one. You know that so the wisdom of human governments doth determine every where. And the case speaks itself, that these are apt, and fit, and suitable methods; they carry their own reason in them. Such persons, before the solemn public judgment, and the consequent execution upon that judgment, are neither, I say, treated as innocent, nor as convicted; but there is a mixture in the treatment, which they generally find and meet with: some kind of severity they do undergo, even before their trial and judgment, which may be looked upon as some way penal; and in some degree it is so. Nor is there any thing of severity used towards such, but upon some proof, upon some evidence, as such persons are convened and accused before a magistrate, convicted in some way, though they have not a full conviction: they are brought before them, committed by them, held under restraint, that justice may not be eluded; but that they may be in safe custody. But yet, for all that, there is no formal judgment passed upon them, nor execution consequent unto such judgment, till there have been a very formal trial, and a full conviction.

Much at the same rate, is the state of the case here between God and men, though not for the same reasons, not in all respects for the same; not that the delinquents may be in safe custody, and so finally not escape his justice; for he knows well where to have them at any time, and any where. Nor is any thing of lenity used towards them, upon the account that they are not convicted, nor fully convicted. For every man's case lies perfectly open to the divine view; but there is severity used towards them, partly for warning to others, and partly for monition and excitation to themselves; because God intends a treaty, and deals with them in order to pardon and forgiveness, which is not the usual design of human governments. And for the same reason is lenity used towards them; not because they are not convicted: for their matter hath, to the Divine eye, a thorough perspection, and the whole state of their case at last is seen through and through. But, as was said, that by such gentleness they may be more treatable, and capable of being applied to, in order to their conversion and final salvation. But upon the whole, nothing could be more becoming of God, than that there should be such a mixture as we find of severity and lenity in this present dispensation, antecedent to the future judgment that is to pass upon them. And then,

(2.) Nothing could be more becoming of God, than the determination that he settles concerning man for the future; that is, that this death, in all the fulness of it, shall finally be inflicted upon them that are finally impenitent; those that persevere in enmity and rebellion to the last, and never consort with, never hearken to, the terms and overtures of reconciliation; for what else should be done in such a case as this? Do but consider the nature of man. He hath a mortal part about him. It is not reasonable to think, that God should make that mortal part immortal, only that men might continue sinning against him, on earth, uninterruptedly and everlastingly. Was that to be expected that it should be so? And he hath an immortal part, a mind and spirit that is immortal. What should be done in such a case, with such a creature as man? was he to annihilate that immortal part? That was as little to be expected, that God should have made such a creatures with such a nature, and then seem to repent that he had made him such, and so that he should immortalize that which was mortal; or, as I may say, mortalize that which was immortal.

But, I say, that he should do either the one or the other, was for no reason in the world to have been expected from God, the great Lord and Maker of all. He deals with the creatures that he hath made, suitable to the natures that he hath given them. It could not be any blemish to the divine perfections, that he made man at the first with such a nature. If his mortal part always hanged about him, it should have made him capable of no higher felicity than this earth did afford; and sure that had been a diminution of the divine goodness. If he had not made him with an immortal mind and spirit, he had not been capable of felicity, as he had not, it is true, been liable to endless misery. But then, he had not been capable of future felicity. Therefore, consider the matter how you will; look upon all men as having sinned, and consider death hereupon to have passed over all, nothing could, in this case, be more becoming of God, than his deportment towards men; whether you consider his present dispensations towards him, or whether you consider his determinations for the future. But then,

3. We have this further to collect, that men's deportment, in this case, is most unsuitable, most unbecoming of them, and most unanswerable to the state of their own case. Death hath passed over all. Do men carry it suitable hereunto? We might, in many instances, show you how far they are from doing so, from carrying it suitable to this state of their case; that is, their being under a universal death.

(1.) Very plain it is, that many never think any such thought,—"I am under a doom." It is true, they cannot escape thinking themselves mortal, and that sometime or other they must die; but that this is a doom, a sentence upon them from an offended Creator; how many are there that pass away their days, and never think such a thought: "I am a sinful creature; and God hath been offended; and, therefore, I must die; and, therefore, I am, in many other respects, miserable in the mean time." How many that never think one such thought, that never consider the

state of their case as it relates to God. The miseries that befall men here under the sun, they seem to apprehend as if they sprung out of the dust, but apprehend nothing of a *nemesis*, of a *vindicta*, of divine displeasure therein.

Indeed, if there were a correspondency in the temper of men's souls, unto the state of their case, in this respect, wherein soever God testifies his resentment, they would have a resentment. By all these efforts of present divine justice, upon an apostate world, God is expressing this his resentment; "I am ill used by my own creatures;" that is the language of every such providence. "The creatures that I have made, carry it insolently, injuriously, undutifully to me." Providences are vocal and articulate, do not only carry a voice with them many times, but a voice that is expressive of a meaning, which is interpretable; the Lord's voice cries many times to the city, and, in general, it speaks this sense every where; where his providences are afflictive, and reach men's bones, and their flesh, or touch them in any other sensible effect, God is angry, these are the breakings forth of his just displeasure towards a wicked world, against sinful revolted creatures. But with the most, there is nothing of this kind thought of; and therefore, they are full of lamentations for the evils that do befall them, accounting them infelicities; but never look upon them as penalties; which, if they did, that would carry a signification with it of their own guiltiness; that these things befall me as a sinner, and as an offending creature. And,

(2.) Where there are any such thoughts, how rarely do they stay in the minds of men, and how seldom do they dwell upon the contemplation of any such thing? Whereas, if matters were with men as they should be, in these respects, these should be their thoughts lying down and rising up, and from day to day, all the day long, as while men do yet remain in an impenitent and unreconciled state. God speaks his mind in reference to such, that he "is angry with the wicked every day;" so then it should be thought of every day. And it would make men's spirits most restless and uneasy with them. O! what an insupportable thing is it to be under the displeasure of him that made me! and that he should be angry with me every day; that his displeasure should be upon me, even while I am eating, as was said concerning the people in the wilderness; "his wrath came upon them while they were eating, while the meat was yet in their mouths." Sure it would make a man never eat with pleasure, when this should be understood to be the state of his case. And again,

(3.) Men do not meditate an escape. How little is there to be seen of any such thing, in this world, as flying from the wrath to come! as John the Baptist's auditors are said to be doing in a kind of fright—"Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" How little is it, that looks like this, in this wretched world! There would be consultations, if men were aware of this state of their case, and their spirits were impressed any way suitable to it. There would be counsel held: "We are under divine displeasure; what course shall we take to avert it? to appease that anger which we cannot bear; which will consume and burn up all before it, if it continue unappeased?" And again,

(4.) For the most part, men are taken up about alien things, things most alien and remote from any thing of this kind, or what the exigency of their case requires and calls for; even though they are warned and told of it, and called upon from time to time. This is no new or strange doctrine among us, who live under the Gospel; that the state of man is a state of sin and misery; to tell men, you are by nature children of wrath, you are under guilt, you are sinners, and "the wages of sin is death;" this is not strange to the ears of men. You cannot have lived years together under this Gospel, but you must have heard of these things often; and surely the generality of them who were wont to hear the Gospel, do hear these things frequently inculcated. But what are the workings of their minds and thoughts? Do they bear any correspondency to such things as these, so often urged upon them? "You are a guilty creature," saith the word of God unto them; "you are under death. What will you do in this case? what course will you take?" "Why, I will clothe myself as decently as I can; I will go in a modish dress; I will try the relishes of this or that, or the other sort of wine." "Why, you are an undone creature; you lie under death: what do you wish in this case?" "I wish I had as neat and as well-furnished a house as my neighbour; I wish that such a commodity would fall, that I might have the better time to buy; or that such a commodity would rise, that I might have the better time to sell." With things so altogether alien from this business, are men taken up in a continual course. "What is all this to the state of your case? You are under death, man! do you understand that? You are under guilt; and by being under guilt, lie under death." And,

(5.) They seek relief against the miseries of their present state, by such things as not only do not afford it, but make their case worse, or they have that constant tendency to make them worse. "Death that hath passed upon all, hath passed upon you:" they are repeatedly told so. "Well, what do you think of it?" They have the presumptuous appearances of death continually in view; but the inward sense of their heart is such as this: "O, that I were a rich man; that I had a great estate; that I had but opportunity enough to live a voluptuous life!" or, "Such a one hath wronged me; I wish I knew how to be revenged of him?" Men think to relieve themselves against what annoys them, and is a part of the misery of their present state, by things that would not only be no relief, but make their case far worse. For do you think it would mend your case, or would you be happier men, and safer from eternal death, and from Divine justice, that threatens you, or presseth you, if you were rich? If you were never so rich, could you thereby redeem your souls, and expiate your guilt, and make satisfaction to the justice of an offended God? If you could live immersed and swallowed up in pleasure and voluptuousness, would that better your case? Would it not make it far worse? If you had the revenges you would seek; if you could gratify the enmity of your own heart, (which is part of your misery, and a great part too,) by making another man miserable also, would that mend your case? Nay, would it not increase the guilt? Would it not strengthen your bonds, and lay you yet more open to divine displeasure? Again, in the last place, though one might multiply instances of this kind much further,

(6.) They are, for the most part, (so far as their external circumstances will admit of it,) jocund and merry, and very well pleased with their state. How little suitable to this apprehension, "Death has passed over all." We dwell in a world deluged with misery, and through which men are generally making way, and sinking deeper and deeper into eternal misery, and into that state wherein death is to be consummate, and in its fulness. To have the opportunity (as there are none but have very frequently) to hear discourses of men, in whom there yet never appeared the least sign or token of repentance or reconciliation with God, how jolly and frolicsome they can be, (if, I say, their external circumstances can admit it,) would you think these men considered themselves as under death, as under a doom from the God against whom they have sinned?

Is it not wondered at, if a condemned crew in chains, and only expecting the hour of execution, should be entertaining themselves with music and dancing, and pleasant stories? How amazing a thing is this! would you not say of such "laughter, it is madness?" and of such "mirth, what doeth it?" as the wise man saith, Eccl. ii. 2. Why such deportments as these, are they like men perishing, going down to perdition? To be pleasant and merry, and not to be reconciled, not yet to be at peace with God, to have no security from the wrath to come; to have death hanging over a man's head, not as the way to glory, but as a doom and curse upon him; and to be jovial and frolicsome under all this, would amaze any man that were serious, to consider that it can be so! And,

4. We may further collect, hence, how little it is that principles do signify, generally, with men. Though those principles be never so common, and never so certain, and evident, yet how little do they signify! That the state of man is a sinful and miserable state, is a common principle; it is a principle that doth obtain, not only among Christians, but among pagans; their writings and books are full of it. Most pathetical complaints and lamentations, we frequently meet with, in their books, upon this account, speaking of the degenerate state of man, and that he is not the creature

that at first he was; and speaking of his miserable state, and even in a way of *nemesis*, and as the effect of his displeasure, who made him, and hath been offended by him. But among Christians, it is so common a principle, that every child that hath learned any thing of his catechism, (as I hope you generally do catechise your children,) if you but ask them, What is the state of man by nature? they will answer, It is a state of sin and misery:—just the very meaning of the text: "Death hath passed over all, for that all have sinned."

But how strange is it now, that so common a principle should signify so little! and again, that so evident and so certain a principle should have so little signification and efficacy with it as a principle! that, though the state of man is a miserable state, and that he lies under death, is matter of fact, it should have no more effect! Indeed, as to the most tremendous part of this death, that is out of sight with many; but, for the more sensible part, that lies open to every one's view. It can be a doubt with no man, whether he shall die or no. Death passeth over all. But how wonderful a thing is it, that a principle, a common principle, a most evident principle, and that carries the greatest certainty with it imaginable, (as to what at least doth highly deserve our consideration,) should be so ineffectual!

And as to the other part, it is generally professed, and they who make it their business, as much as they can, to disbelieve that more dreadful part, that remaining and unseen part of this miserable state, yet have not conquered the fear of it; if they have conquered the belief of it, yet it is plain, they have not conquered the apprehension of it: there is *formido opposito*, and cannot but be; for at least they know nothing to the contrary; they can never prove the contrary, that there is no hell, no judgment to come. And, in a matter of this nature, men that would but act according to the common reason of men, would think that the matter did need demonstration, that there is no such thing, and not run a mad hazard and adventure; when there is nothing lost in the course, to which the truth, in this case, (supposing it to be truth,) would lead; and when, by following the contrary course, the misery and mischief that must ensue, are both unsupportable, and will shortly be irretrievable.

LECTURE XXXIV.*

THE remaining *Use* that I intend, will be only directive,

1. To such as yet abide in this death, that have passed over all: and we have reason to apprehend that to be the case of some: and, 2. To those that have, through the grace of God, in good measure, escaped out of it.

1. To the first sort, I have a few things to recommend by way of direction. I cannot tell how to apply things to persons particularly: that you must do yourselves, as you find it to be with you. But if that be the case of any among you, that they have reason to judge so, that they abide in this death that has passed upon all, then I would have such,

(1.) To apprehend that this is the common case, and may probably be their own, as to that which is most dismal and horrid in this death, that hath hitherto passed over this world. It is (as I told you the last time) one thing to entertain a truth, as a mere notion in the mind, against which we have nothing to say, and to give but a faint negative assent to it; to wit, not to dissent or disagree to it: and another thing to receive it as a vital and practical principle, that influenceth a man's heart, forms his spirit, and governs his course accordingly thereunto. And so is this very little apprehended to be the common case, that "death hath passed over all." But labour you feelingly to apprehend it, as to what is most obvious every way; that is, that we are all subject to bodily distempers and diseases, which are tendencies to, and will end in, death: why, about this, we can none of us be in any doubt. We are sensibly told it, even in our flesh and bones, from day to day. But the worst part of this death is what our flesh cannot feel; that is, a death upon our spirits; that our minds and hearts are disaffected to God, dead towards God, in direct opposition to what the case is with the regenerate, and which they ought to be judged and reckoned, as to themselves. "Reckon yourselves (saith the apostle, Rom. vi. 11.) dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." The death that stands in opposition to this life, is the worst and most horrid part of the death that hath passed over this world.

Labour to apprehend this to be the common case; and then consider, whether it be not your own. If the matter do look with a dubious aspect, it ought to be considered with so much the more attentiveness, and with so much the deeper thoughts. And a slight hope that there is an alteration, should not satisfy; and, indeed, you cannot reasonably think this to be a little thing, or that it should not be greatly considerable. For is it a small matter to have passed from death to life? This death passed over all; and an escape out of it, is not so little a thing, when you compare those two expressions, 1 John iii. 14. "Abiding in death;" and, having "passed from death to life:" it must be a most close and pungent question—"Which is my case? Either I have passed from death to life; or I continue still in death." And, therefore, it ought to be considered over and over, "How stands my case towards God? I have a natural life in me, in which I am capable of natural actions; but I have a holy life in me, by which I am capable of the actions that are suitable and proper to that? by which I can act and move towards God, not *simpliciter* or absolute, but *quoad hoc;* to that one end and principle it was made; for there is a deadness, no propension towards God, as regeneration would make it alive towards God. "How is it with me in this respect?" That ought to be deeply considered. "Is not this, the horrid dismal death that hath passed upon all, still upon me?" And,

(2.) There is this further, that will be suitable by way of direction to that former case, to mind those things principally that are most pertinent to it, and to be less concerned about lesser things. And pray let such take in this direction: Have you reason to apprehend this to be your case, (and a fearful case it is,) that that death, even the worst of it, that hath passed over all, remains upon you? Why, then, think of those things that are most pertinent to that case; and consider less the lesser things. As to whatsoever you have to complain of besides, say with yourselves, "Aye, but all this is nothing to the death that is upon my soul:" and it looks like distraction, when men's minds are wholly engaged and taken up about lesser things; but, about this greater and more important thing, they have no consideration at all. As if one should seem concerned that he hath a scratched finger, when he hath a mortal wound in his breast that he is unconcerned for; or, that he should have lost a pin, when his house is on fire; or, that a man's head should lie easy upon the block, when the fatal stroke is just going to be given. For, do but consider what this will come to at length; this death will be eternal death. The disinclination and deadness of man's spirit towards God, can have no other issue, finally, but "Depart from me," if it continue. You are departing from God; you will be continually departing: why, Depart from me for ever. This sort of death upon the souls of men, it is not a distinct thing from the state of hell; it is the same thing begun; there is no further difference than between death inchoate, and death consummate. And, indeed, every thing that a man doth, and every thing that a man saith, is all idle impertinency, while this great is neglected. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," is the advice of our Saviour. You are seeking many other things; but have you observed the order, to seek that in the first place? Otherwise you have mistaken the order. What other things you may lawfully seek, you are then to seek, when you have begun, duly and regularly, with the first. And, therefore, if another should tell you of such and such things that are not so well in the state of your case externally; such a man hath failed, that owes you money, or the like; you may answer him; "Alas! do not tell me of these things, I am dead towards God, what do you tell me of this or that?

* Preached Oct. 13th, 1694.

I am like to be lost for ever, if grace do not give a speedy help to the sad state of my case." And again,

(3.) Look upon this case of yours as being, though very sad, yet not remediless, yet not uncurable; look upon it as a remediable case. For it is, indeed, all one as to any thing of real gain and advantage, not to apprehend your case to be sad, and not to consider it as capable of a remedy. Upon the former supposition, there will be no care at all exercised about it; and upon the latter supposition there will be no hope. But there must be a setting of both these on foot: you must have a care about the state of your souls; and you must have hope about it too; or else nothing will be done in you, or by you, that will be of any value. You should, therefore, consider and bethink yourselves, that there is a way of escaping out of so great a death; that many have escaped you know; and they can think of it with pleasure, and take delight in their knowing of God, and conversing with him. Divers that have (it may be) spoken to you of such things of God, as you have not found in yourselves. But that which hath been, may be; that which you see by frequent experience wrought in others, may be wrought in you. God, that hath been so rich in mercy to others, why may he not be God rich in mercy to you also?

Thus you should consider the matter as capable of a remedy. There is a word of life sent forth; and there is a Divine Spirit breathing in this world, even upon this world that is lost in death; and it hath reached many with mighty influences. This is that which ought to be a mighty spring of hope to such as will not abandon themselves to despair. Do not say concerning yourselves, "There is a death abiding upon my soul, and therefore, it must be always so;" for that is to suppose there is no difference between earth and hell; between the state of men under the Gospel, and the state of devils under an eternal doom, in the full execution of it.

I pray consider, our business is not to instruct the inhabitants of hell, but to speak to the living on this side of the grave. We are teaching men, and not devils. And none should put themselves into their state and case, as if they had nothing at all to do, but merely to wait till the fulness of death should come upon them, and swallow them up. Our Lord saith, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." And when such a voice as this hath come into this miserable earth, no man ought but to look upon himself as concerned therein, as well as others: and not to say, "God doth not mean me; he intend no such kindness to me:" but rather, on the other hand, to say, "If a vital savour hath been diffused with that voice, with that invitation of grace, in and by the word, and its vital influences have reached many, it may also reach me." There ought to be an expectation raised in us, that it may; and many are ruined for not expecting it, not waiting at the posts of wisdom's door. Prov. viii. 34, 35. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watcheth daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my door. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." This, men ought to set before their eyes, in all their attendances upon God, in his ordinances; so that they may be able to give this account, if any should ask them, What are you going for? "Why, I am going to find life; wisdom saith, They that find me, find life. Here I go to seek life for my soul."

The very order of the divine precept in this thing, is, "Hear and your souls live;" which shows with what design men should hear and wait upon ordinances. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price, hear and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, (were David's own dying words,) ordered in all things and sure; and although my house be not so with God, as to domestical concernments things are not so well, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Now saith the prophet, in that Isaiah lv. 3. "Do you but incline your ear, and hear with expectation that your souls may live, and they shall live; and this will tend to bring you into an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David." And yet, again,

(4.) Let me further recommend this to you, to hasten your designed escape, without deliberating and pausing long upon the matter. We are to look upon this world as deluged by death and wrath, which have overspread it, as that sulphureous flood did the valleys wherein Sodom and Gomorrah stood; and when Lot was to be saved out of that ruin, in mercy to him, for this the angel hastens him, and cries out to him, "Escape for thy life." So should you consider the exigency of your case not to be less; nay, it is incomparably greater. It is not a little valley, but it is the world, that is deluged with this sulphureous flood. Here is a complication of sin and death overflowing the world; and which hath made the world a far worse region than that plain was. Now it is said to you, God doth by the voice of his word, and of his ministers, say to you, "You are to make haste and escape for your life." How many did the fiery flood of Sodom overtake quite! Therefore, this case doth not admit of any delay; for how soon this flood may overtake you, you know not. It may, so as to overwhelm you quite; and so as to make a hopeful case a desperate one. And, therefore, consider from hence, in the next place,

(5.) Of how great importance it is for you to apply yourselves to, and gain an interest in, the favour of God. Make from hence an estimate of the divine favour, and of the necessity and value of it: for if this be your case—Death hath passed over all; if any man thinks of an escape, from thence it must come: "What can I do for my soul? How can I fetch my soul from that death that is within me; that my soul is ingulphed in?" Why, "in his favour is life." There is no hope in life but in his favour. Look which way you will, and there is death overwhelming of all; and you are no more capable of getting out of this death of yourselves, than of touching the heavens with your hand, or seating yourselves among the stars in the firmament: therefore, it must be an all-favourable, and all-powerful hand, and that, too, stretched out from heaven, that must save in so distressed a case as this.

Now how should this recommend to us the favour of God, as that wherein our life doth stand, when death hath thus passed over all. If you should speak to a neighbour, to a father, to any one that hath the dearest affection to you, "O! my soul is in a state of death; how shall I get it out of it?" They must all answer, as Jacob did to his wife, "Am I in the stead of God, to give thee children? Can I inspire life into thy dead soul? No; I cannot do it for thee." This you ought to inculcate to yourselves, over and over, that your life stand in the divine favour. It is he that breathes into you the breath of spiritual life, to make yours become a living soul. They are his kind looks that carry life in them. If he will breathe upon your soul, it shall live. As that hath been his way, when souls have been wallowing in their blood, to look upon them with a kind look, and say unto them—"Live:" his look doth carry life in it. He looks life into the soul that is dead. As in that 16th Ezekiel, in the beginning, and towards the latter end of that chapter you will find how the matter ends: "I entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." He looked upon them in their blood, and said unto them—"Live;" and enclosed them in the happy bonds of that covenant, that are vital bonds; their souls being bound up in the bundle of life. And, therefore,

(6.) That I may shut up what I shall say to this sort of persons concerning that death which hath passed over all, it ought to prepare them for the reception of the Gospel, wherein are discoveries of the divine favour, and the way wherein it reveals itself for the saving and renewing of souls lost in death: what a preparative for the Gospel should this be! To have this inwrought into my soul, that death hath passed over all, so, amongst the rest, it hath passed over me, involved me also. Then how pleasant a sound should the Gospel be to lost souls! "The Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost." The forlorn and distressed estate of this world, hath been compassionately considered by the great Lord of heaven and earth; and God hath given him life, that he might give eternal life to as many as he hath given him. And when men are once prevailed upon to give themselves to him, as the great Prince and Lord of life, who only can deliver

them out of death, then, it is without question, that God hath given them unto him, and it is with that design, that he may give them eternal life. But then,

2. As to those who, through grace, have in a good measure made an escape out of that death that hath passed over all, it is obvious to yourselves, to understand wherein that death stands, which hath passed over all, and which you have made your escape from. You know, that part of it concerns the outward man; there is no escaping that which is equivalent, and more than equivalent. There is an escaping out of it; not that such shall not die, but they shall rise again: "their corruptible part, (as the apostle saith) shall put on incorruption; and their mortal part shall put on immortality; and their vile bodies shall be changed and transformed into the likeness of Christ's most glorious body." There must be a conformity between the Head and the members, so that by him they escape not from it, but out of it; emerge, get out of that state, that must sooner or later seize upon these mortal bodies.

But then, for that spiritual death that is, in this present state, naturally upon all men's souls, that you have been actually in, that you have escaped, that there must be an escape from eternal death. Now let me ask you, Have you, through grace, been enabled to escape, in good measure, out of the worst of this death, that, in the present state, men are liable to; to wit, death towards God? Then, if the matter be so, there are several things I would recommend to you, and so put an end to this discourse.

(1.) Be much in grateful acknowledgment of God's wonderful mercy; make that much the great business of your lives, for it is a great thing God hath done for you, in that he hath delivered you from so great a death! Think what the state and posture of your souls once was God-ward. "Why, let me have heard never so much of the most glorious, the most excellent of all Beings, in which all the excellencies of all beings did meet together, infinite love, and light, and life, and purity, and holiness; yet, alas! I had no inclination towards him; no desire after him; no complacency in him; my soul was as a stone, or stick, or a log, without sense, without motion God-ward. I have heard (it may be) of his name often; but it never carried a pleasant sound to me. It was no pleasure to me, to go and shut up myself in a closet, and pour out my soul unto him. As for taking complacency in him as my best Good, so as to account him my exceeding great Joy, alas! I knew not what this meant. It was a soul that might have been a stone, as well as a soul, as to any inclination it had God-ward. But, O! blessed be God, that it is otherwise! When I hear of that very Sacred Name, it transports my soul, to think that All of being, and blessedness, and wisdom, and purity, and light, and love, is mine. And if all the world should frown on me, and he give me but one smile, it is as life to my soul. Now, the very seasons of my converse with him, are as my repasts. What pleasure do I take when the sabbath is come; when the light of that holy day doth dawn upon me! Formerly, I knew not what to design for God. Now my end is the glory of God: if I can but speak a good word for his honour and interest, it falls in with the inclination of my spirit."

Why sure, if this be the case with you, it is the most inexcusable thing in all the world, that there should be no more of gratitude for so great a change wrought in you. Consider that God, in so altering the case, hath done that for you which all the world could not have done. Lay all the powers of men on earth, and of all the angels in heaven together, they could never have made your hearts to love God, or desire after him, or delight in him. But he hath touched your hearts with a vital touch, and made them love him, and live to him.

When the difference is so vast (as I was saying to you lately) between abiding in death, and having passed from death to life, (and, whereas, every one must be in one of these two states; so that every one must say, either "I do abide in death," "I have passed from death to life,") if we, by gracious vouchsafement, are passed from death to life, if this be our case, and we are not much in thanksgiving; O! how inexcusable is this! And, Christians, I would have you to consider this, that this it is which starves religion, and is the reason why, where it is, it languisheth; for want of this exercise of thanksgiving. And know, that where such praises are ascending to heaven, benedictions will be also descending from heaven. Were there more of these acknowledgments, how would blessings descend! O! we should be more in blessing of God for heavenly things in Christ Jesus; that we should have that opportunity, from day to day, of beholding death spreading abroad its dark shadows over all the intellectual world, to wit, over the minds and spirits of men, and, I was myself a sad instance thereof; but God hath delivered me out of this miserable state; O! not to be much in thanksgiving, is the most inexcusable temper that can be! But again,

(2) You ought, hereupon, more to pity the miserable world that is yet in death, over which death hath passed, and in which it abides. There is altogether a fault among us upon this account; we want bowels, we have not compassions, as we ought to have within us, towards perishing creatures. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." It is a great evidence of our having obtained mercy, our being merciful in this kind. But to be destitute of compassion for the sad case of dead souls, is a sad symptom. To say, I have a husband, a wife, a child, that are under the power of death, have nothing of the life of God, no favour of God, no fear of God, in them; nothing that looks like the grace of God; why, not to compassionate them, sure, such a frame as this hath in it no indication of divine life springing in us: we see them, and converse with them, but seldom have a regretting thought that toucheth our hearts: this is, sure, altogether a fault, and knows no excuse, admits of none. It argues, at least, a very great languor of the divine life in us, when we have so little a sense of so horrid a death, as lies upon the generality of the world. Those, in whom this divine life doth take place, they are regenerated after God's own image; and that must intimate to them to be like-minded with him. God hath showed mercy unto us, and therefore, mercy was his nature, it is in the highest perfection in him. If I am transformed after his image, I must imitate him in this. If I have nothing of the divine offspring in me, how am I his child? And, if I have, why should it not operate in me in this kind, in reference to those that were in the same case with me, before I obtained mercy. And again,

(3.) If you have, through the grace of God, in a good degree, escaped out of that fearful state of death, which abides generally upon the world, make little reckoning in comparison of what you suffer in lower kinds, and in lesser respects, whatsoever you have to complain of upon other accounts. Let not the sense of lesser evils enter deep into your souls. He hath saved you from the greater evils: he delivered you out of that so great a death, which overwhelmed you and all the world. It is, then, very disingenuous to complain of lesser and smaller things, when, from the greatest evils of all, he hath saved us. As the apostle saith, 2 Tim. i. 9. "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling." Saved already in a degree, and, by saving us in that degree, hath made eternal salvation as sure as if we were in heaven already. And therefore, I say, reckon little of these lesser evils that may befall you in this present state. And, in the last place,

(4.) It is very suitable to such, further to consider, that the rest of the evils of the world ought not to be considered as strange, when it is to be remembered, that a universal death hath passed over all men. That such and such evils should befall in this world, should not be thought strange, since this death hath passed over all. We hear of a great mortality (it may be) in such a country, and of a great many lives cut off in a battle, in another country. There ought to be bowels of compassion upon that account; otherwise we have put off humanity. But it is a great madness that we should make a greater matter of these things, and, at the same time, make nothing of that universal death that hath passed over all. Where are our minds, that we do not weigh the difference of things?

I have one thing more, before I pass to the doctrine of a Mediator, and God's method of saving souls. And I desire to speak to it from another text. And that is, to

vindicate the justice of God as to this sad and calamitous state, that is universal upon mankind, by reason of the fall.

LECTURE XXXV.*

Psalm li. 4, 5.

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

HAVING discoursed to you at large from that Rom. v. 12. concerning the fall of the first man, and the entrance of sin and death into the world, thereupon, I told you in the conclusion of the last discourse on that subject, my further intention was to say something for the clearing of the Divine Justice, in reference hereunto: and it is a debt, a right that we owe to the Supreme Ruler and Lord of all, not only to confess his righteousness, but, as occasion serves and requires, to vindicate it too. We cannot be just ourselves, if we do not, to our utmost, in all things justify him.

My design is not, from this scripture, to speak absolutely of the corruption and depravedness of the human nature, which I did before, from that mentioned scripture. But to speak of it relatively and comparatively, in reference to the righteousness of God, or so far as that may appear any way concerned in the matter. And indeed, it might be thought, there lay before a very unexceptionable state of the case between God and man, in that scripture that I last, and so long, insisted on; which makes death only to have followed sin into the world. And what can be more natural than the connexion of sin and death, or the consecution of the latter upon the former, that death should only be said to have entered into the world, and to have passed over all, inasmuch as all have sinned.

But men's curiosity doth not rest here, while they will not pretend to deny the actual consecution of death upon sin; they make a great deal of difficulty to understand how sin should follow upon innocency. And here the difficulty is not so great neither, concerning the lapse of the first man, and the death following upon that as to him; as also the case hath no appearance of difficulty concerning the angels that fell, when (as the case was with the first man) every one offended in his own person, and so was in his own person to answer for the offence. But that that makes the difficulty is, that men should be generally involved in sin and ruin, upon the lapse and fall of one, (their common parent,) when they could not help it that they were his children, or that they were born of such progenitors, that all should be undone by a fault which they could not prevent, and unto which they had no accession.

This difficulty hath cast divers men upon distressing thoughts. Some have thereupon denied the corruption and depravity of human nature; and they might as well deny that there are men upon earth. Some would have the souls of men (the only capable subjects of sin) to be propagated as the bodily part is, which would hazard the doctrine of their immortality. Others have had their other conjectures, which I shall not mention.

But, upon the whole, we ought not only to censure with indulgence, but to commend and praise, the spirit and practice of such, in reference to this matter, as have, with sincere and unbiassed minds, set their understandings on work, how best to maintain high and honourable thoughts of God; that have been studious to find out, or apt to entertain, any hypothesis that might be more suitable unto that. This (I say) is not only to be censured indulgently, but to be commended very highly, provided that men do not, herein, run counter to express divine revelation and into uncontrollable experience. And that they be not so over-officious as to affix characters upon the blessed God, under the name of perfections belonging to his nature, which do not truly or really so belong, and which he never owned or claimed as such.

It is very plain, that this holy Psalmist had seen through this difficulty; he saw with better eyes than the most, more sincere, less malevolent; and had digested the matter in his thoughts; otherwise he would never have laid down these two things thus together as we find, "That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." He, at least, thought these things very agreeable with one another, if rather, he did not bring in the latter as a proof and demonstration of the former, which the demonstrative particle prefixed (behold) would lead one to think.

But let us, first, view the words a little in themselves, and we shall discern the schesis and reference to one another, a little better thereby, afterwards. That which is here, in this place, rendered actively, is in the 3d chapter to the Romans rendered passively, "that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and overcome when thou judgest;" there it is, "when thou art judged," as we read it, the Septuagint being followed (as frequently it is) by the apostle. But I cannot apprehend (as some do note) any need of a different reading in the letter of either text, as some critics take notice; the Hebrew affix being set as there it is, may indifferently be read, either actively or passively. And so may the Greek word, as is most evident; and so we may render either place either way, and all will come to one and the same sense: that God may appear just, that his justice may be triumphant and victorious, whether it be when he judgeth; or when men judge and censure him, and his proceedings.

And so the current of this discourse of the Psalmist will be plain and clear: "I acknowledge mine iniquity, and my sin is ever before me; against thee only have I sinned: that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest" —that is, referring to the 3d verse, "I acknowledge," (as here I do,) then the acknowledgment follows, "that thou mayest be justified." "I make my acknowledgments so and so, that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, or mayest overcome when thou judgest, or when men presume or take upon them to censure thy proceedings towards me; though thou shouldest proceed with all the severity that thou hast threatened by the prophet sent unto me: for not only have I done this particular evil against thee, and in thy sight, but I have been an impure creature, even from my own original: thou hast much against me, not only for this single instance, but as I came a sinful polluted creature into the world: I was shapen in iniquity, formed, turned therein; as soon as I grew warm in the womb, (as the word signifies,) so soon sin did insinuate into my very *præmordia*, into the very *principles* of my being."

And to the same purpose is this passage quoted by the apostle, in that mentioned Rom. iii. 4. for when he had been charging sin, before, upon all the world, on the gentiles, in the first chapter, and on the Jews, in the second, he only puts a question in the beginning of the third chapter, "What advantage then hath the Jew, if all be found equally under sin?" And he only admits them to have an advantage in order to their recovery, but none at all as to their degeneracy. In reference to their recovery they had a great advantage, inasmuch, as to them were committed the oracles of God, the discovery of his counsel and way for the reconciling and saving lost sinners. But he considers nothing, in reference to what he had asserted, of their part and share in the common depravation and apostacy; they were as bad as the best.

Then he immediately lays down what is quoted from the Psalmist, and makes that his scope and mark in all the rest of the chapter, that is, to justify God; that he might be justified, and overcome in all his pleadings and judgings: or when man should implead or take upon him to censure God, that still his justice might be victorious and triumphant. This is the mark that he aims at manifestly, in all his following discourse; showing at large, the universal depravation and corruption of human nature every where; having proved (as he saith at the 9th verse)

* Preached October 20th, 1694.

concerning both Jews and gentiles (which did then divide the world) that they were all under sin.

Indeed, the immediate subjoining of this unto the mention of the design in this psalm, seems to carry this aspect with it, that the Psalmist intended to speak or introduce the mention of this depravedness and corruption of human nature, (even as it was in himself,) as a proof and evidence of the divine justice, as that which might tend to clear it so much the more. But at least it must be collected from his subjoining the mention of the latter to the former, that he looked upon them as very consistent and very reconcileable things, as things that carried no repugnancy in them to one another. And even this will serve my present purpose and design. So that all which I shall observe from this context, and the connexion of these two, herein, shall be this,—

That it is very consistent with the justice of God, and very reconcileable to it, most reconcileable to it, that men, born of human parentage, do universally come into this world impure and polluted creatures, even from the womb.

The Psalmist did not so much as imagine (you may see) an inconsistency between the corruption of nature in man, and the justice of God, in that he so lays them down by one another. Surely (thinks he) these cannot quarrel, no man can reasonably think they will; they are to be looked upon, and ought to be looked upon, as sociable truths, that can agree well together, even these two, that man from the womb is an impure, sinful creature, and God is everlastingly and immutably a holy and righteous God.

Now in speaking to this, I shall reduce all that I intend unto a Four-fold Conclusion. And shall gather up all, under these four: As,

I. There can be no real opposition between truth and truth. And so, that whatsoever we are convinced of is truth, another truth that we are equally as certain of, cannot be opposite thereunto. If there be any such appearance, it is but a false appearance, it is only a seemingness of opposition and contrariety, but really there can be no such thing. And,

II. That we may be most certain that many things are, when how they are, or come to be as they are, is by us unexplicable and unaccountable. And,

III. That it would be very unreasonable to oppose and object dubious and uncertain things, against what is sure and plain, and most certain. And,

IV. That it will be, especially, most unreasonable to oppose uncertain to certain things, when there are many considerations capable of being alleged that will break the force of such objections. But nothing can be alleged to shake the certainty and firmness of the foresaid truths. Then it will be most of all unreasonable.

Unto these *four conclusions* I shall reduce what I intend, and what I think reasonable to be said to this matter.

I. That truth can never be opposite to truth; and that therefore, what things we are most certain of as true, they can lie in no opposition to one another. But whatsoever of such appearance there may be, must be a false appearance. I instance, here, in these two things, that we are concerned to reconcile,—the perfection of the Divine Nature, (comprehending his justice, and,—this sinful imperfection and pravity of the human nature. These are both most certain truths; and, therefore, it is impossible they can be really opposite to one another.

1. The absolute perfection of the Divine Nature, comprehending his justice, which must be one great perfection belonging thereunto. It is that, indeed, which, by the ducture of the text, we are principally concerned to vindicate, and so we are, indeed, any divine perfection against which the doctrine afterwards asserted may seem to militate. Every one will grant, that acknowledgeth a God, that justice must be a perfection belonging to his nature. And we may, these two ways, be most absolutely ascertained hereof.

(1.) That whatsoever doth belong to God, belongs to him essentially; his nature can receive no additions nor diminutions, and consequently is immutably so; can no more cease to be so, than he can lie, or do any ill thing; nor this, more than he can cease to be; because all perfection (and that of justice among the rest) belongs unto him essentially. So that he can no more cease to be just, than cease to be God. And,

(2.) Of this we may be ascertained further, thus, that whereas justice is a virtue inclining a person to give to every one his due, that which is owing to him, rightly belongs to him, God cannot be a debtor to his creature, otherwise than by voluntary obligation that he takes upon himself. No one can be a debtor to another, but one of these two ways; either naturally, or by some other sort of contract. He is, indeed, naturally a debtor who is possessed of somewhat that doth belong to another, that was originally his, and to which he retains a right: a man is in this case naturally a debtor to such a one by the immediate law of nature, to give him his own, or a full equivalent that he shall be satisfied is so. But so it is altogether impossible that God can be a debtor to his creature, who (as the apostle speaks, upon another account, Acts xvii.) hath given to all life, and breath, and all things. They can be proprietors of nothing, in opposition to him or against him, that are not masters of themselves, or of their own being. They owe him their all; to them there can be owing nothing; that is, not from him, to whom they themselves owe their very all. It is a just challenge, therefore, that is given to all the world by the apostle, Rom. xi. 35. "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" Produce me the man that can say, "God is a debtor, that he hath given him this or that, for which he is owing to him, let any man produce his claim, and it shall be recompensed to him again." So that naturally, God cannot be a debtor to his creatures.

And then, if we speak of the second way of his being a debtor, God hath never obliged himself to keep sin out of the creation, so as that he should break with his creatures, and do them wrong, in not doing all that was possible to omnipotency to make them impenable. Show the obligation, produce the bond, where is it? If this were to be alleged, He broke with his reasonable creatures at first, in making them free, in infecting liberty into their natures; why he never laid himself under any obligation against this. And therefore, it is every way most evident, that God must be immutably and unalterably just in all his dispensations; and particularly in this, in not hindering that sin should come into the world, and draw death after it, and spread itself through the world, (as we find it hath done,) still drawing on, and attracting death. And,

2. On the other hand, it is a most clear and certain truth, that as the nature of God is most absolutely and unalterably perfect, including all perfection, and that of justice unalterably among the rest; so, the nature of man is, in this present state, and from the very original of individual persons, sinfully imperfect; and they come into the world impure and polluted creatures from the womb. The justice of God is not to be solved that way, by denying that there is such a corruption and depravity of nature, transmitted even with the nature of man itself from age to age; as therein is comprehended both a negative part, a disinclination to all good; and a positive, an inclination to all evil. And that this also may be in our minds as a certain truth, I shall insist a little, and but a little, upon it. It not being my design (as I said) to do what hath been already done, to insist purposely upon the corruption of human nature absolutely, but only relatively and comparatively, according to what reference this matter may bear to the righteousness of God's dealings with men. And to evince this,

(1.) It is the most plain and express language of the Scripture. And what ought to determine in such a case? what could determine us but that? There is not another tolerable sense to be put on these words, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." It is most unreasonable and absurd, to pretend this to be only a particular acknowledgment of David concerning himself: as if he had the most unhappy procreation of all mankind: as if there were more corruption, or another way to convey corruption to him from his parents, than was with all the rest of men. It can carry no meaning, but that he doth involve his own in the common case, that it was only with him, in this respect, as it is with all others, that they are (as the expression is in John ix. 34.) altogether born in sin, all unclean. And it was, therefore, impossible that

any thing clean should come out of them. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one?" And you have the same thing more expressly asserted in general terms, in the 58th Psalm; "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." And sure, every man is wicked till he is converted, till he be regenerate and turn to God. Therefore, it must be an affirmation concerning all mankind, that they are estranged from the very womb, averse and disaffected to every thing that is good, and propense to that which is evil; as the following words signify: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies; made up of falsehood, even from their original. And,

(2.) The Scripture doth, in multitude of places, speak of the universal actual sinfulness of the world. And whence should that come? In that 3d chapter of Romans, how often it is inculcated! I have proved (saith the apostle) Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin; and they were all the world. And all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; (afterwards in the same chapter, 19.) and that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Now, this being plainly asserted in the word of truth, how should this actual sinfulness begin with every one, so as to be universal? If it were only by imitation and example, it is strange that all should imitate the sin, but none follow the better examples, which, when renewing grace hath done its work, do come to be extant and appear in view, so as that many do carry it (through the grace of God) without visible scandalous enormities. But that which is so universally common, must have some common cause. The reason of the thing speaks itself; when there is not an instance to be found of any one that hath lived without sin, how should this be, but that it hath and must have sprung up with them? must have come with their nature, their very nature itself? for it is as common as their nature. And we may,

(3.) Argue from experience, that such a corruption and pravity as this, doth spring up with men and all human creatures, that come into this world, the ordinary way; that is, we cannot name the time when such are capable of acting electively or rationally, but they are of acting sinfully as soon. Doth not every one's experience tell him so? That there are disinclinations to that which is good, and inclinations to that which is evil, appearing most early; peevishness, crossness, pride, strife, falsehood, a disposition to lie, to be revengeful and vindictive; nothing is plainer; so that to deny the pravity of nature, even from men's *primordia*, is all one as to say there are not such natures in being. And then,

(4.) We may argue, too, from the manifest subjection and liableness of infants, even in their infancy, unto punitive strokes; sickness, pain, and death itself. Wherein is this, that the infant age is not exempt, if it be innocent, if it hath nothing of impurity and pravity adhering to it? If here it be said by way of reply to this, that "we find the inferior creatures, brute creatures, are liable to the same thing; sickness, and pain, and death, but that doth not prove them to be sinful, or that they have any sinfulness adhering to them;" why the case is so manifestly different, that it is an easy matter for the objector, if he please, (whosoever he be,) to answer himself. It is plain, death was never a threatening to them; it is plain that the brute creatures, as they grow up, do not come to sin at last, they never sin, nor are ever capable of it. And if, therefore, it should be said, that such infirmities, ails, maladies, and mortality itself, are afflictions only, and not penalties. I would fain know whether that do not equally reflect upon the divine justice, (of which such do seem to be so tender,) and a great deal more, to afflict a creature which is at the same time asserted to be innocent, every way innocent; doth not carry a worse face, a worse aspect with it, than to assert this creature to be innocent? And to say, these things are not punitive, but afflictive, is but a notional difference; and the notion doth neither do them good nor harm; neither makes the affliction less or more. But sure, it is more honourable for God to say, that, observing the impure and depraved state of human nature, even from its very original, he animadverts upon that impurity. As why should not the holy God express a displeasancy with every impurity wherever he finds it? And no man accuseth another of any injustice if he do destroy a creature as soon as it begins to live, that is known to be noxious, hurtful, and mischievous; as the crushing of serpents in the very egg; when this is so apparent, that there are so noxious qualities, which there is nothing but want of opportunity and time that hinders their exertion in noxious and hurtful acts. To express a displeasancy towards the innate disposition, can be no way unworthy of God. But that we shall have occasion to speak of more hereafter.

In the mean time, this is the First head proposed—that truth cannot be opposite to truth.—And, therefore, we being ascertained of this two-fold truth, that God is most perfectly and unalterably just, and that man is sinfully imperfect and impure, from his original, that is, the original of the individuals, these two cannot be opposite to one another; one truth cannot destroy another truth, or impart any repugnancy thereunto. And therefore, if there be any appearance of contrariety between these two, it must be but a false appearance. For of these things we are most certain; they are undoubted truths. Therefore, to solve the phenomenon, we must look another way, and there will be opportunity for that, in speaking to the following conclusions. In the mean time, let these two things be inlaid deeply in our souls, that God is absolutely and every way perfect, so as that that perfection of his must include the most unalterable eternal righteousness and justice; but that we for our parts are, from our original, impure and polluted creatures; that there may be, accordingly, suitable dispositions in us to acknowledge and adore his righteousness, and to own and abhor our own impurities; to walk humbly in the sense of them as long as we live, and to have so much the more disposition to admire that grace, which hath its exercise towards such creatures as we, when in point of justice there was enough against us to have produced, for ever, all the exercise of such grace.

LECTURE XXXVI.*

II. Now I go on to the next *conclusion*, which is the second in order, namely—That we may be most certain that many things really are, when the manner how they are, or how they came to be, is not understood by the most, or may be of very difficult explication unto any.—And to accommodate this to the present purpose I shall proceed by steps.

1. It is very plain that there is a cloud and darkness generally setting upon, or a veil is generally drawn over, the inceptions of things of whatsoever kind, as to how things of any sort do take their first beginnings. It is observable that, usually, a veil is drawn over those things. Look into all the productions of nature, how things do take their first rise, it is generally very inexplicable, and very unconceivable, at least as to the generality. For such substantial beings as are most sensible to us, as we see with our eyes, or touch with our hands; so that there can be no place or room for any doubt, but that such things are; yet how they came to be, who can give an account? We can none of us be in doubt but there are really these heavens over our heads, which our eyes see from day to day; and this earth underneath us, which we may touch when we please. But if God had not given us a general account of the Genesis, of the beginning of the heavens and the earth, at what a loss would men have been every where! And at what a loss generally are they, how man himself began to be in this world, where they have not the ducture of revelation in the case, to assist and help them! To think what ridiculous accounts, some of the wise and learned philosophers of this world have given of the very inception of mankind, it shows there is a veil, especially over the beginnings of things, when of the things themselves there is the greatest certainty imaginable. As who can make any man doubt whether there be such heavens as we behold, or such an earth as we walk upon, though we should never have known, if God had not told us, how they began. And to go a little further,

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2. We are most certain of many acts; and abilities and dispositions thereunto; which actions, how they are performed, very few can give an account; and where the dispositions thereunto did arise, they can as little tell. We know that we can see with our eyes, and that we can hear with our ears; and that such actions are performed by those very organs that are used for these purposes. But how few can tell how this act of vision is performed, or can give an account of the structure of that organ of the eye by which it is performed! and so, how the action of hearing is done, and of the aptitude of the organ of the ear thereunto! But we certainly know that we see, and that we hear; and that we see with our eyes, and not with our hands; and hear with our ears, and not with our feet.

And so, for acts of understanding; we know that we do know; we know, and are certain that we do exert acts of reason, that we use thoughts; but who can tell how a thought arises in a man's mind, and how men come to have the seeing, and hearing, and speaking, and reasoning power and faculty transmitted from age to age, and from generation to generation? That there should arise still from age to age such a sort of creatures as have these faculties and powers belonging to them, of that we can give as little account, as how grass, and herbs, and flowers do spring up of their proper seeds upon this earth, from year to year. But of the things themselves, we have the greatest certainty that may be. And to proceed further,

3. Concerning *sinful* acts and dispositions, we can be in as little doubt that such things there really are, though there be here a greater difficulty how they came to be. It is true, that this question vexed some of the wisest, and most learned, and most considering of mankind, before Christianity took place among them; since there was nothing but what was good at first, how should there come to be any such thing as evil in the world? And indeed, the counsel given was wise and wholesome, rather to consider how sin may be got out of the world, than how it came into it. But there is a necessity upon us, to endeavour, to our utmost, the maintaining and keeping up high and honourable thoughts of God, as that upon which all religion depends, and without which men will have a pretence to let it vanish out of the world; yea, and endeavour to make it so to do.

But whatsoever difficulty we may suppose in this case, the matter of fact is plain and evident; that is, we do find that there is such a generation of creatures, that do spring up in the world, from age to age, that are together both reasonable and sinful, as they could not be the latter without being the former. This is plain matter of fact, that a sort of creatures, which do exercise reason, do also sin from age to age, and universally: and that this, their disposition to sin, and their actual sinning, must have a beginning; and it cannot have beginning, but from some common and universal cause, being itself universal; so as that there are no instances to be found where (if there be an opportunity) a disposition to sin doth not betray itself; so as that men are not more inclined to act rationally, than they are to act irregularly. They act rationally in many instances, they act irregularly in greater instances, and more important, and that constantly, in all times, and all parts of the world. This is plain matter of fact; and men do, therefore, fill their own souls, and fill the world, with confusion and miseries.

This (I say) is all plain matter of fact. We cannot be more certain of any thing, than we are of this; that is, that men have so much reason still remaining, and belonging to their nature, as by which they are capable of knowing they were not self-made, not self-originate, that they came from another, that they owe their all to an infinitely perfect Being; that must have all perfection in itself, and all being originally in itself, and that their interests are some way or other involved within one another. And they are, thereupon, capable of understanding their own obligation to love God above all; and to love one another as themselves. Very plain it is, if men did but act pursuably to such apprehensions, whereof it is most apparent their nature is capable, they would pass their days, here in the world, in very great tranquillity and felicity, within themselves, and towards one another; and, that it is impossible that those miseries, and those evils and confusions which fill men's spirits, and fill the world, should arise from any thing else but the inclination that is in them to do otherwise; not to love God with a supreme love, and not to love one another with co-ordinate love. So that this is as plain matter of fact, as that there is a world, or that there are reasonable creatures in it. This hath always been a difficulty, how (as to some particular persons especially) sin should have its beginning, when that it hath its continual being in the world proves itself to every one's sad experience and observation, that doth but take notice of himself and the world. But yet,

4. Though, how sin is transmitted to particular and individual persons, from generation to generation, it cannot be so easily told, yet it may most certainly be determined how it is not, (which most concerns us with reference to our present purpose, to vindicate the righteousness of God,) that is, that it is man's creature, and not God's. It is not he that hath infused any thing of evil or malignity into the nature of man, which was originally pure and perfect as it sprang from him, the Author of all nature. This is out of question, that he made man upright, but they have sought and found many inventions, Eccl. vii. 29. This appears, by what that great man Moses saith to the people, over whom God hath made him a leader and a head, when he was now shortly to take his leave of them; in that much celebrated song which he begins with this, as the design of publishing the name of the Lord, "Because I will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe ye greatness unto our God;" (that, we may take up and accommodate very fully to our own, that is, to the common case;) "He is the rock (this is a part of that name of his which he designed to publish in that 32d Deut.) his work is perfect, and all his ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." But "they have corrupted themselves;" (as in the 4th and 5th verses of that chapter and onward:) a self-corrupted generation of creatures they are. And concerning this, we may assure our hearts; and ought to do so.

When we are in this case to apologize for God, it is indeed an awful thing that is undertaken; but with the profoundest reverence, and with the greatest veneration, and with a deep resentment of the necessity that men should be so prone to arraign the Almighty; and he be (as it were) put to plead his cause at his own creatures' bar; as the apostle's reading of the words doth imply; and as the former part, even of that clause in the 4th verse of this Psalm, is understood to signify too: That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest; when thou speakest by way of apology for thyself. It ought to be done with a sincere design, and with a joyful confidence, that he will always overcome and triumph when he judgeth himself; and when men presume to judge him, and pass their censures upon his ways and methods towards the world.

But it is a thing must be done, because there is a proneness in men's minds to admit of, and to have thoughts arise and spring up in them, which have a reflecting aspect and look upon the most high and most righteous God. As you see, the apostle, in the place where he quotes this text, (Rom. iii. 4, 5.) objects this; "Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance?" when he was, in the foregoing and following chapters, proving Jew and Gentile to be all under sin. "Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance? I speak as a man," *humano more, after the manner of men*, which implies, so men are apt to speak; that is, to raise questions and doubts in their minds, "How will [illegible] that stand with the unrighteousness of God?" Therefore, the apostle thought himself concerned to vindicate God's righteousness; and he doth it largely, even there in that mentioned chapter, and afterwards in several others of that epistle; and it ought to be done with a pleasant confidence that there will be a universal applause to the righteousness of God at last, by all his intelligent creatures; that all shall agree and conspire together, in saying, "Holy and true art thou, O Lord; just and righteous art thou, Lord God Almighty, thou King of nations and of saints."

This thought, is to say, by way of introduction to what I have further to add to this last mentioned head, that while we may be in some difficulty, how corrupt nature comes to be propagated from man to man, and from age to age,

we are yet at a certainty how it is not done; that is, that sin is none of God's creature, and that he never infuses a sinning disposition into any creature whatsoever. The belief of this we ought to establish and settle in our own hearts, as that by which we shall but give God his due, and consult our own peace, and more flourishing and prosperous state of religion in our own souls; that it may have no damps there, or nothing that may tend to extinguish or deaden it in us. And therefore, this I shall evince to you, by some plain considerations; though one would think, indeed, the thing needed no eviction. As,

(1.) That the purity of God's nature cannot but abhor it: it is impossible that a thing so repugnant as sin is to the pure and holy nature of God, can spring from that pure and holy nature. Nothing but what is good can come from the first, the original, the essential, the most perfect good. And,

(2.) That which he hath forbidden, it is impossible that he should cause or procure; that would be such a contradiction as we could never suspect an honest man of, that he should forbid and procure the same thing.

(3.) Much less is it possible that he should cause that which he punisheth, and punisheth with so terrible severity; the proper wages of sin being no less than eternal death. And,

(4.) It is impossible he should cause that which he hates; "Do not the abominable thing which I hate, which my soul hateth." Of that he can never be the author and the cause. And,

(5.) It can never be, that he should be the cause or author of that, which is so highly injurious to him, which doth him the greatest injury imaginable. For though, from the perfection of his own nature, it is impossible it should do him any real harm; yet it doth him the greatest wrong. What a disorder hath it introduced into the creation of God! how hath it spoiled his workmanship, in a great masterpiece of his creation, the mind and soul of man made after his image! What deformity hath it introduced in the room of so much beauty and glory! How manifest an attempt is it against his throne, even in the very nature of it! What a violation of the sacred constitution of his government! It is sin that hath set his own creature against him, disaffected it to him: that is, in itself, in its rooted aversion from God, and hatred of God. It is the most unconceivable thing in the word, that God should make his own nature hate himself, disaffect himself. It is sin that hath actually torn away so great and noble a part of his creation from him, and plucked it from his obedience and subjection; even all the generations of men from age to age, and so great a part of the heavenly host, and turned them all into rebels against their Maker and rightful Lord. It cannot be that he should cause so mischievous a thing.

And it is too faint a vindication of God, in this case, to say, that therefore he cannot cause, because it is a defect, and so not a causable thing, or capable of any other but a deficient cause. This is very true indeed, but very short, for that is no more than to say, God caused it not, than to say, another caused it not; as a thing that cannot be caused, cannot indeed admit of positive causation. That is very true, but we do not do God right if we do not assert also, that he could not bring it about, that it should be any agency of his; not in respect of the object, as being an uncausable thing, but in respect of his own nature, as being repugnant to his holiness, and to his sovereignty, and to the sacredness of his government. And as that which he could not but abhor from, and hate, and hate with utmost detestation. And I add to all this,

(6.) To evince that this transmission of sin cannot be by any direct hand that God hath in it, in that he hath provided so costly a remedy against it, that he should cause that which his own Son came down into our world and died to destroy. That so wonderful a thing should be, as his descent into this world of ours, "who was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and who upholds all things by the word of his power, and by whom he made the worlds;" that he should come down and appear once before the end of time, (or upon the declining of time from its fulness,) to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; (Heb. ix. 25.) that he who sent his own Son to put away sin upon so very expensive terms, by the sacrifice of himself, to throw it out of the world, should have a hand in bringing it into the world, is the most inconceivable thing that can be.

And it is that which all agree in, that however sin came into the world, God was not the author of it. Every one abhors that thought, men of all sorts, of all persuasions and religions: pagans themselves, in all the descriptions we find in their writings concerning original evil, all agree in this, that God is not the original of it: all agree to discharge God in the case, though they are put (some of them) upon most absurd imaginations and devices to assoile the matter in themselves; and to avoid one difficulty, run themselves into as great or greater. Some talking, they know not what, of a certain ancient nature, from whence evil must come: some positively asserting two principles, as Manes and his Manicheans did, an evil principle and a good. But this, all have agreed in, by common consent, that God could not be the Author of the sinful evils that have, in so great measure, confounded the world, and spoiled and corrupted the nature of man.

And that being so far clear, we may reckon that a good step is taken towards the mark that we are aiming at, the vindicating of God's righteousness in reference to this thing. There is the greatest certainty imaginable of the thing itself, while we are uncertain of the manner how sin comes to be transmitted from age to age, or to take its beginning in particular persons in a continual succession. Though there be (I say) a difficulty as to that, there is no difficulty as to the thing; and there is no difficulty as to this, how it did not, though it remain still a difficulty, how it is. It is not from God, sin is none of this creature.

Then I should here subjoin, in the third place, that next conclusion which I design to speak to, namely,

III. That it is the most unreasonable thing that can be, to object uncertainty against certainty. It being certain, that God is immutably holy and righteous, and that his nature is absolutely perfect; it being certain that man's nature is now become sinfully imperfect; and it being again plain, that we may be certain of very many things, when how they come to be is doubtful, and perhaps to many, or the most, inexplicable: but as to this particular thing, we do not know how the corruption of particular persons began, but we know how it began not; that is, that it is impossible to be any way imputable to God: we thence proceed to show, how unreasonable a thing it is, to object to the things about which we are uncertain, against the things that are most certain, that carry the greatest and plainest evidence with them. And of this we may give you instances enough.

If we should argue against the existence of this world, because we have not a particular, distinct account how it took its beginning, how absurd were it! If we may be capable of being puzzled with such questions as these, the great God put to Job. (chap. xxxviii. in several verses of it.) If he should bid us gird up our loins like men, and say he would demand of us, to answer, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth! declare, if you have understanding, Who hath laid the measures thereof, if ye know? or who hath stretched out the line upon them?" If he should expostulate with us, touching our knowledge of the way how the sea is shut up as within bars and doors; or how ice, and snow, and rain are generated; and would put us upon giving an account of these things; would it not be the absurdest thing in all the world to deny their being, because we cannot give a distinct account of them? If we cannot give a distinct account, (or it may be,) a satisfactory one to themselves, how matter was moved yet in the unformed chaos; and when the measuring line was stretched forth of this world, and the foundations laid of this mighty work; if we cannot give an account, how light and darkness were severed, which was the parting place, the utmost boundary of light and darkness; if we cannot give an account how the waters of the sea came to be collected and gathered into one place, and to be confined and shut up there, so as not to return and overflow the earth; if we cannot give an account how the rain was generated by its father: "Hath the rain a father?" (as it follows here;) how ice and snow came to be condensed into these several substances, wherein we find them;

therefore, to say that none of these things are; to oppose the uncertainties about the production of these things, to the manifest, undoubted certainty of their existence, is certainly such an absurdity as we could never prevail upon ourselves to be guilty of.

But (as hath been told you before) we cannot be more certain of any thing that we see with our eyes, or of any faculty or power that belongs to ourselves, than we are, that there is a continual transmission of sin in this world. We cannot be more certain that man is a seeing creature, that he is a hearing creature, that he is a reasoning creature, than we can, that he is a living creature. And it would therefore be the most absurd thing imaginable, to oppose and object that which is uncertain, against that which is so plainly and fully certain.

And I might tell you here, of a great many uncertainties, which they must suppose and take for granted to be very great certainties, who should form a disputation in this case, concerning the production of the corrupt and sinful nature in man. But that would be too large a theme to enter upon now. Yet, all will resolve into this in general, that as to what difficulty men do imagine in this case, it is only from their opposing philosophical uncertainty to theological verity; and till philosophers be agreed in other matters, we have very little reason to regard problems, doubtful problems, that may refer to this particular case; of which I may instance at another time, but shall not now. But (I say) let them come to a certainty in other matters first, before they expect to be much regarded in reference to determinate, theological truth, which, we reckon, stands unshaken as the foundations of heaven and earth. When they have brought themselves and the world to a certainty about such things as the ebbing and flowing of the sea, the causes of the very centre of our world, the powers of the loadstone; whether it be the sun or the earth, and which it is of these, that moves the other about; when they have brought such things as these, and a hundred more that might be mentioned, to a certainty, then they may, with more pretence, expect to be listened to, as to their determinations which may more directly respect this case.

LECTURE XXXVII.*

Under the opening of the third conclusion, proposed to be spoken to, for the clearing of what I intended in the choice of the text we are upon, namely,—that it is most unreasonable and absurd, to oppose and object dark, and doubtful, and uncertain things, against that which is most evident and certain;—we showed that there are many uncertainties, that men of philosophical minds, and geniuses, do commendably enough employ their thoughts about, while they do not attempt or offer at such a thing, as to oppose them to manifest, revealed truths. But if they will do so, it is in all reason to be expected, that they should come to a more general certainty than they do, or are ever like to do, about philosophical matters in general. I instanced in several, and told you, I would instance in four more which do more directly concern this case, about which here lies the objected difficulty.

That the human soul cannot be propagated: to suppose it can, would be to expose the doctrine of its immortality to manifest hazard. It must be supposed, that being immediately created by God himself, it comes pure and sinless out of his hands. The body itself, without the soul, cannot be the seat and subject of sin, as no irrational thing can, which is most evident. Therefore, many think there can be no such thing as propagation of sin from age to age; for how should it be? It cannot be at first found in the soul, which comes pure out of the hand of God. It cannot be seated or subjected in the body, which is not a subject capable of sin, or any mortality, abstractly considered. Here (I say) men do but oppose uncertainty to a certainty; a great many uncertainties to one plain and absolute certainty; that is, that sin doth really descend from age to age; and it is manifest, and in view with every one that observes that men do not sooner begin to act rationally, than they do begin to act irregularly. But to oppose uncertainties to this plain and evident certainty, is a most unreasonable thing; equally unreasonable as that sophistical reasoning was of the philosopher that would undertake to prove, that there could be no such thing as a local motion; and another undertook to refute him, by walking up and down before his eyes. There are too plain and sad proofs, in the walkings of men from age to age, that as soon as ever they begin to move or act as men, they do act sinfully; and so that corruption doth descend and is transmitted. This is certain and evident. But to make this a difficulty, there are a great many uncertainties supposed and taken for granted, about which it concerns ignorant creatures (as we all are) to pronounce nothing one way or other.

It is uncertain when or what time human souls were created, or were not created; whether all at once and at first, or whether at some distance of time, before they become to be united to human bodies. Not that the truth needs a determination of these matters, that way that would seem more favourable to it, as if it be not otherwise defended. But, in the mean time, we ought not to make difficulties greater than they really are, by supposing and taking for granted, that those things are certain, which really are not so.

It is, again, altogether uncertain by what sort of divine agency a human soul comes to be united to a human body, or whether they come into that union electively, yea or no; or whether by a certain sort of fatal necessity; these are uncertainties, and we are not to pronounce concerning them as if they were certain.

We do not know; philosophy cannot, with certainty, determine the strict, precise, limitative bounds, between the sensitive nature and the rational. We can be at no certainty, what dispositions there may be in the sensitive nature unto sin, though there can be no such thing as formal sin in it, abstractedly considered; so that whensoever a reasonable, intelligent spirit shall come to be united therewith, it will thereupon certainly sin: if it act, it will not act more rationally, than disorderly and irregularly. As if never so skilful a hand do play upon an instrument out of tune, if it sound it will sound amiss; if never so skilful a horseman ride a lame horse, if he move he will halt. We are altogether uncertain what of sensitive nature may be propagated with such and such dispositions in it, before the supervention of the reasonable soul.

We are uncertain what orders there are of created spirits, so little do we know, and we ought not to pretend to know, of the affairs of the invisible world; so that we ought, in justice, to profess ignorance of such things as these, whether there be any common spirit of nature endowed with a plastic power, that may be immediately concerned about the union of human bodies and human souls with one another.

These are things, though contraries, whereunto for the most part men take upon them to determine as certainties: and so make objections against the most certain and unquestionable truths. And the most of the difficulties in this matter do but arise from opposing doubtful philosophical problems to unquestionable theological verities. And whereas, there is a very great uncertainty in most parts of philosophy, in natural philosophy more than in any other part, therefore, the presumptuous determinations of men, about these things, are very unfit to be brought into any competition with the most certain divine truths; that is, to oppose things that are doubtful, that can never be proved one way or other, unto things that are either most evidently proved, or are in themselves so evident, as to need no proof. And this is the case as to the most of what appears difficult in this affair. But then,

IV. The last conclusion that I am to insist upon is this, that it is most of all unreasonable and absurd, to oppose such uncertainties to certainties, to object what is doubtful and dark, against what is plain and evident, when (as hath been evinced already) there is nothing can shake the asserted truth; but there are many considerations may be brought to break the force of such objections, as are raised

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against it; then, it is most specially absurd. And under this head it was that I designed to produce and lay before you, the many considerations which tend to break the force of any thing that can be objected against the consistency and agreeableness of the righteous and universal perfection of the Divine Nature, with the continual transmission of the sinful imperfections of the human nature.

The difficulty I need not remind you of, only, that it may lie the more distinctly in your thoughts, it is reducible to two heads; partly somewhat on the part of God, and partly somewhat on the part of man. On man's part first; because he is first to be considered in every thing that is evil, whether it be evil of sin, or evil of misery. And from what hath been said it appears difficult to be conceived, how man can be capable of propagating a sinful soul to another, when the soul, as such, is not propagated; and sin must reside there, inasmuch (as hath been said) as the body cannot be the seat or subject of sin, abstractly considered, and without the soul. On God's part, how it should stand with his righteousness and other perfections, continually to co-operate with second causes in the transmission of a sinful nature from age to age among men; so as thereby to make this world a seed-plot of wickedness and misery, to all its inhabitants, from one generation to another; upon which, many have thought themselves necessitated to deny any such thing as the propagation of a corrupted nature, from generation to generation; and so to ascribe the whole business of the continuance of sin from age to age, in the world, only to imitation; one generation learning to be wicked, from another wicked generation, that did precede. But now, I say, as nothing can shake the truths that have been asserted concerning God's righteousness, and man's unrighteousness continually descending, and transmitted from age to age; so there are many things to be alleged, to break the force of any such objections as these. And,

I shall offer this to consideration, that in reference to God's concern in this matter, (about whose name and honour all our souls ought to be most tenderly and deeply concerned,) there is nothing to be said or thought but this, it were easy for him to have prevented such a descent of sinfulness, from age to age, in this world, by which also misery is continually entailed upon the inhabitants of it. But now (I say) consider these things in reference hereunto.

1. Suppose that men should, hereupon, ascribe the whole business of the continued sinfulness of the world, from age to age, to imitation only, this would no more solve the difficulty, than what is ordinarily asserted; for, even that also, how easy were it for him, the great God, (as we may think,) to have prevented this; that is, to have prevented the descent of sin, from age to age, by imitation! How easily might he have annihilated this world, or annihilated this creature man, either by exerting his power to this purpose, or, indeed, by only withholding it! for then all must drop. Or, how easy had it been to him, to have made all perfectly good, and that they should have continued such, from age to age! and then there would have been no bad example for any one's imitation. And we do not know, but that the Divine Agency (such as it may be for ought we can tell) may be as little concerned in transmitting human nature in its corruption, from age to age, as it would be, in sustaining sinful creatures that are corrupted, in co-operating in sinful actions. And without the co-operating influence of the First Cause, we are sure nothing can be done by a sufficient influence; that is, not done by an efficacious and necessitating one. And therefore, it is in vain to allege that, for the solving and expediting this difficulty, which doth itself carry as much of difficulty in it. And again,

2. This is next to be considered, that it is very unreasonable to have been expected from God, that he should annihilate an intelligent creature, upon the account of its having offended him, or upon the account of its being likely to transmit its likeness to those that shall proceed and spring from such a progenitor. It was a most unreasonable thing (I say) that God should, hereupon, annihilate or reduce to nothing such a piece of the work of his own hands; that had neither been suitable to the wisdom of God, nor his goodness: not to his wisdom, for there had been a direct regression, that he should undo and destroy his own work; because such a creature, the subject and effect of his productive and creating influence, had transgressed the law and rule of its own creation; it was unreasonable that he should, thereupon, reduce it to nothing. And it had been (I say) very disagreeable to his wisdom, as if he were surprised by the fall and lapse of his creature, as if he had not foreseen, as if he had not sagacity enough to apprehend, such and such consequences. It hath been always (as we find by the course God hath held) reckoned by him, most worthy of him, and most God-like, to turn ill events to good; but not to go back. And we shall, in time, come to show you, how he hath done it in this case, to his own most transcendent glory, and to the advantage of his creatures, such as do not, by their own faulty opposition, stand in the way of his kind and gracious method towards them. But, that he should annihilate or bring a creature to nothing, that was capable of obeying and serving him, because he did disobey him, and because he is likely to transmit sinful inclinations to those that come of him, or come after him, this is never to be expected from the blessed God; it is a thing disagreeable to his wisdom, that he should do and undo. When he is said to have repented that he made man, as when he brought the flood upon the world; (Gen. vi.) that, as is plain in itself, and, all do agree, is spoken *more humano*. And though he did (that he might give one proof of his just displeasancy at the apostacy of the world) bring on that deluge, yet you see he would not destroy the kind, but resolved to continue that, in subserviency to his further great and glorious designs.

And indeed, it could much less have consisted with his goodness, to destroy the capacity which was in that order of creatures, of so high and great things as he designed them to, which should spring up of the human race. That he should prevent himself of that wonderful exercise of his mercy, grace, and good-will towards men, of which we shall have occasion to discourse in its proper place, and as the series of things shall lead on. Therefore that I would have to be considered, that it was a most unreasonable thing to expect that God should, upon the transgression of his reasonable creatures, and lest sin should be transmitted from age to age, annihilate the kind, and reduce all to nothing. And,

3. It was as little to be expected, that God should at first make all immutably good; that he should have made all his intelligent creatures immutably good at first, both angels in heaven, and men on earth; and so have provided and taken a course that sin should always be kept out of his creation; and that it should be impossible, where there is a nature propagated from age to age, there should be any thing of taint capable of falling into that nature: I say, that God should have done this, was as little to be expected from him.

We may judge of things safely by the event; for that is judging after God; that is judging that to be becoming of God, which he hath done; that course to be most suitable to him, most God-like, which he hath chosen. And so far as we can discern the reasonableness of the course which he hath taken, we are to take notice of it, and avow it upon all occasions. Now, from the course he hath taken, it appears most suitable to the excellencies of the Divine Being, every way, that he should have made intelligent creatures at first mutable; not to make them immutably good and happy, which was to be their final state; but that there should be a preparatory, subservient state, introductive to that final state. This appears, upon all accounts, to have been most agreeable to the Supreme Wisdom and Goodness, that his creatures should not arrive to the highest perfection that they were capable of all at once, and at the very first, but that they should undergo a trial; and in that case, (if they must do so,) they must be left to their liberty at first; and being left so, there would be still a possibility that sin should be; and being once, that it should go on and be transmitted from age to age. And therefore, I add,

4. That God's omnipotency, or what his absolute power can do, is not the only measure (abstractly considered) according to which it can be said God can do this or that. It is not fit or proper to say, that he can do whatsoever omnipotency, abstractly considered and alone, could do; because he is not a Being of power alone: power alone

gives us but an inadequate conception of God; it doth not give us an entire conception of him, as if he were nothing else but power; for he is wisdom, and goodness, and holiness, and righteousness, and truth, as well as power. And therefore, that only is, in a true sense, possible to God, which is suitable to all his glorious excellencies to do, conjunctly considered; and not what is suitable to his power alone, and separately considered from the rest. When it is said, God cannot lie, and God cannot deny himself, and the like, the meaning is not as if there were a want of mere power to do any such natural act, considered as a natural act; but it is impossible to the divine perfection, (consider him as a Being of universal perfection, wherein all perfections do meet,) to do things so unlike himself, so unworthy of himself.

Therefore, it was never to have been expected from divine power, or because he is omnipotent, that, therefore, he should do all things which that, abstractedly considered, could do; as to have put an end to the generations of men lest they should sin on; or to have made all perfectly good at first, so as it should be an impossibility that any such thing as sin should be in the world, which only the possibility of its continuing in the world could, in an ordinary course, be prevented. This (I say) was never to be expected from the infinitely, absolutely, and universally perfect Being, who hath other perfections belonging to his nature besides that of power. But those things are only possible to him, which (all things considered) are most worthy of him, and most suitable to him. And again,

5. We are further to consider, that the course of nature in the universe, it is most observably fixed and settled; so as (unless it be now and then in single instances) not to admit of change; that is, not to admit of change in an ordinary course. We may observe, that the course of nature is very rarely ever altered. But it were very unreasonable to expect, that it should be statedly or often altered. We find alterations in single instances; as in reference to that great order of day and night, when the sun stood still so long one time, and when it went back so many degrees at another time. And so when the sea did not hold its own course, or do agreeably to its property, as a fluid thing, to overflow all that came within the compass of it, but was bound up as to the Israelites that passed through it. And the fire, it acted not, according to its natural property, to consume and burn what is combustible, in the case of the three children, who were in the fiery furnace unharmed and unhurt.

But we are never to think that the course of nature should be ordinarily or often altered. And that it is not, even because it is not, we ought in great reverence and humility to apprehend there are mighty occult reasons for this. And it should lay an awe upon our spirits, to behold the Author of nature, the God of nature, acting it on, in so stated and unaltered a course, from age to age, through the succession of many ages. If we understood no reason why it should be so, yet our minds should be struck with great reverence when we find, that ordinarily it is so. But we may apprehend very great reason for it too, in reference to the stated course of natural causes, as to what doth concern ourselves. What confusion would it make in the world, if, ordinarily, the sun should vary its course, that no man could tell when it would rise, or when it would set, or when to undertake such or such a business? If God's obstructing that course in a single instance or two, should have been often repeated, so as to hold men's minds in a continual suspense, the sad and dismal consequences that would have ensued to this world (though this be but a very minute, inconsiderable part of the universe, the whole creation of God) are obvious to every one's view that considers.

And as to the transmitting of the species of things, and the preserving of the species of all sorts of things, in the world, besides the decorum of it, and that admirable proof that there is of divine wisdom and providence therein, the usefulness thereof to ourselves is most apparent to any one's notice and view, that through so many thousands of years there should be a preservation of the kinds of things. Go through the several orders of things: the ranks of things that come under our own notice, is an admirable discovery of God's wisdom and providence, and too little considered and reflected on; that the species of things should be unaltered, that what we find was the property of this or that herb, or plant, or tree, continues so. These things have still the same properties that they had. Look to the animals beneath us; we find the same properties the horse to be described by, so many ages ago, are in the same creature still. There is an admirable discovery of the power and wisdom of Providence in this, which we ought to contemplate with great admiration, and great reverence, and have our spirits so much the more disposed to acknowledge and adore God the Maker of this world, and the great Author of universal nature. It would do more to preserve a religious impression upon our spirits Godward, than is commonly apprehended, if we did, now and then, allow our thoughts to fix in these contemplations, that whereas there is such a collision in this natural world, there are such antipathies and contrarieties in the natures of things, that yet their natures are continued, preserved entire, from being confounded; though there is such a vast multiplicity, yet all preserved entire, through so many thousands of years. But then, consider further,

6. That it is most evident, that the course of nature is as settled and constant, in reference to the production of men from age to age, as of any other creature. This is obvious, to wit, that there do spring up, from age to age, creatures of this species, and of the same kind, as there do of any other creatures of any other kind or species. And that, hereupon, we must apprehend a fixedness in the course of nature, not to be altered for a continuance, though it may in single instances, here and there, in reference to this thing, as well as in reference to any thing else that falls under the regulation and measure of the law of nature. And,

7. It is a mighty confirmation of the natural descent of sin with the nature of man, in the ordinary way, that when God designed the incarnation of his own Son, to avoid that corruption of nature descending to him, he there steps out of the ordinary course; a consideration that hath that weight with it, that if any one allow himself to think, it must overbear his mind in that matter, that sure there is some secret, profound reason in the counsel of God, (whether obvious to our view, or not obvious,) that the descent of corrupt nature was in the ordinary way unavoidable: that when God had a design to incarnate his own Son, when it was intended God should be manifested in the flesh, to avoid that contagion and corruption which, in the ordinary course, is transmitted, he doth in this single instance recede and go off from the ordinary natural course: and so the production is by the Holy Ghost, separating the very matter of the human body which itself, indeed, was not a capable subject of sin, as hath been said, and is plain in itself. But because the human nature had been corrupted, if it had descended in the ordinary way, (and that was inconsistent with the design on which a Redeemer was to come down from heaven into the world,) therefore, the ordinary course of procreation is declined and avoided: a most pregnant demonstration, that, in the ordinary course, sin is always naturally transmitted, in that this must be done on purpose to avoid that taint and contagion that otherwise would have been. But I add, in the next place, and shall go no further now,

8. That men do make the difficulty in this matter greater than they need, by not apprehending and considering aright, wherein the production of a human creature lies. It is plain it doth not lie, though a human creature be a creature of a compounded nature, that hath a terrestrial and celestial part, yet, I say, it doth not lie in the production of either of the parts, but only in the uniting of them substantially with one another. It neither lies in the production of the soul, nor doth it lie in the production of the matter of the body, for all matter is generally apprehended to be ingenerable and incorruptible. But it lies (as I said) in the beginning of these into a substantial union with one another. And do but consider to this purpose, "Wherein doth death lie? wherein doth the death of a man consist?" His death, you will easily apprehend, must stand in direct opposition to his procreation and production. But death doth not lie either in the destruction of the soul, or of the body; but as it is a matter of faith, that the one remains, so it is a matter of sense, that the other remains after death. The soul is gone, but not reduced to nothing; the body

remains, and will continue a considerable time the same entire frame that it was, even when the soul is gone. Death, therefore, doth neither lie in the destruction of the soul, nor in the destruction of the body; but in their disunion. So the procreation doth not lie, either in the production of the soul, or in the production of the body; (otherwise than being so and so modified;) but in the union of those two parts, bringing it about, that they should be substantially united with one another.

And if that be duly considered, there is a great deal of room and scope left to apprehend how such a thing may be very possible, (as we find it actual,) the continual descent of sin, and yet the holiness, and purity, and universal rectitude of the Divine Nature, not having any concern unbecoming itself, unsuitable to itself, herein.

There are many more considerations behind, that will not be without weight in this matter: only, now, let us consider and bethink ourselves (as our assembly dissolves) of this one thing; how much more considerable a theme and subject we have for our thoughts, in that which is common to all ages, that can occur to us in what is peculiar to our own time! We are so amused and taken up about the little affairs (in comparison) of our own time, that we do not allow ourselves to consider and look, as we should do, with just intention of mind, upon those things that are great, and of common concern to all time. And we wonder there should be any miscarriage in the conduct of human affairs, and that the perversity of men, here and there, breaks out in this or that instance, forgetting there is a corrupt, human nature still descending from age to age, and from generation to generation, which naturally makes this world a region of impurity, and consequent misery, and gloominess and darkness. And we do not enough reflect upon the intestine cause of all our evils. Every one would be a great deal more ready to fall to self-accusation, than to the accusing of other men. "I have a corrupt nature in myself, out of which nature spring all the confusions and disorders in the world; all the dismal, tragical things that are any where to be found and observed in it." It is very unreasonable to let our minds be confined to the present, when we have such a vast prospect before us, looking forward, looking backward, looking inward, looking on this and that hand; to bind our thoughts when we have so vast a compass of things to look into, this is neither suitable to the reason of a man, nor so suitable as it should be to the more large and concerned mind of a Christian, about the great things wherein the Christian interest is, itself, concerned.

LECTURE XXXVIII.*

Now we shall go on to add further considerations for showing this *fourth conclusion*. And, thereupon, in the next place,

9. We may further consider, that it is never thought a blemish to the justice of any government whatsoever, that children should inherit the poverty and rags of their parents that were either poor or profligate, or that had squandered or forfeited all that they had. This was never thought to have been a blemish to the government under which such persons may live, that children are born poor, when their parents had nothing to leave them; and so they have rags and beggary for their patrimony. This doth not use to be, or can be, with any equity, imputed to the government under which such live, as if that were to be blamed. And much less is it imputable in this case; because human governors are debtors to the communities which they govern, and do owe to them their utmost care and providence for them. But God (as hath been formerly showed you) can be no debtor to any of his creatures, whether considered singly, or in communities, any otherwise than as he hath by any promise made himself debtor. But he never promised, never obliged himself by any promise, to keep sin out of the world, from hurting creatures that can only hurt themselves by it; or from preventing it to descend or presently to throw it out of the world; though that he will do fully in his own time, and in his own way. And again,

10. There can be no more obligation on the blessed God, to prevent moral defects among his creatures, than natural ones. If he be not obliged to prevent natural defects, he is as little obliged to prevent moral; because moral perfection must be founded in natural; as all morality hath its foundation in the nature of the creatures who are the capable subjects thereof. But plain it is, he can be under no obligation to prevent natural defects, or that his creatures should be naturally perfect: for in what sense will we suppose it requisite that he should make them so? Not with an absolute perfection, perfection in *omni genere;* for that is above the condition of a creature; no creature is capable of being *universally perfect*. That is the peculiar privilege and prerogative of the Original and Uncreated Being, to be absolutely and universally perfect. And therefore, to suppose him obliged to make all his creatures every way perfect, it were to suppose him obliged to have made them all gods; or we must suppose him not obliged to make any thing at all; because it is impossible that a made thing can be absolutely perfect. Or, should we suppose him under an obligation to have made things perfect in any kind above their own? That cannot be thought neither; for that must suppose, then, that there should have been no creatures of any inferior kind, or that all must have been of equal perfection, that every fly or worm must have been a cherubim or seraphim. Indeed, it is a most accurate discourse that I have taken notice of to this purpose, in a pagan writer, (as it is more generally reckoned,) Plotinus, who saith, that "to find fault with the Author of nature because of such and such defects, in such and such sorts of creatures, or in particular creatures, it were to find fault that he hath made the world an harmonious thing; that there are such orders and gradations in it; that he hath made some inanimate things, and endowed some with a life of sense, and some below them with a life of vegetation, and some above them with a life of reason, and some above them with an angelical nature, and the like." All the comely orders of things should not have been, but all must have been of one order and kind. "And, (as he saith,) it were the same thing as to blame a limner, that he hath not in every thing drawn light colours without any foil; or a comedian, (the author of a comedy,) that he hath not made every person that is to act a part, a king, or a hero; that there should be any that doth sustain the part of mean and inferior persons."

It is plain, and out of doubt, that God is not obliged to make his creatures all either absolutely perfect, or to give them higher perfections than do belong to their own kind; or (we may add) to give to every one of them those perfections that that kind is capable of. For we find that there are some of greater health, some of less; some of greater strength, some of less, in that order of creatures wherein they are. And we find that there are such things as hereditary diseases, that do descend, and generally are found every where through the human race. But (I say) God can no more be under obligation to prevent moral than natural defects, among his creatures. And again,

11. We are to consider further, that though the descent and transmission of a sinful pravity with the nature of man may appear to have a difficulty with it, yet it is not altogether unaccountable, if we do but consider things as they are, with that compass of thought which we ought. Nay, it is not ordinarily conceivable, how it should be otherwise, if we do but admit into our thoughts, what a concurrence there is of several things to this purpose. As,

(1.) The retirement of the Holy, Divine Spirit from man, having once sinned. And it is certain, that he did retire thereupon, that he hath retired, otherwise than as according to the Redeemer's method he is returned. There was an antecedent retirement and withdrawing, and that, upon the sin of man, upon sin's entering into the world: for do but observe that Gal. iii. 14, 15. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us; for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles." (That, which was the blessing of Abraham

* Preached Nov. 17th, 1694.

upon that account, might now be a more diffused blessing, and reach the Gentiles too.) For what? That they might receive the promise of the Spirit (or the promised Spirit) through faith. Now consider what the blessing is, and measure the opposite curse by that: the blessing, you see, is the gift of the Spirit; what is the curse then, but the debasing of the Spirit? And certainly then, that was the curse of the law, the curse of the violated law. As soon as the law was broken, the Divine, Holy Spirit was cursed away from the nature of man; or, man was cursed, so as that thereby this Spirit should be withheld, should be kept off, otherwise than as upon the Redeemer's account, and according to his methods, it should be restored. And then,

(2.) Consider, hereupon, the nature and kind of that corruption that is conveyed and doth descend, and how the Scripture speaks of it, generally under the notion of carnality. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, John iii. 6. That is, now, where there is no divine birth, where nothing is born of the Spirit or where the work of regeneration hath not taken place, the production is nothing else but flesh, the mere human nature; to wit, the denomination is taken from that which governs; though a man be not all flesh, the denomination is taken from that which prevails. What is the thing produced when a human creature is born? A piece of flesh: as that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, whenever that birth comes to obtain and take place with any soul. That which is born of the flesh is but flesh; not as if the nature of man were nothing but flesh, but because carnality is the prevailing thing in the lapsed state of man, that carries the name, and now he is called nothing but flesh. And,

(3.) This is to be considered, to facilitate our apprehension of this matter, that the sensitive nature, (which only is capable of being propagated,) though it cannot itself be the seat and subject of sin, yet it may be in very great disposition thereunto; or things may be there, in that inferior region, in that disposition, that there cannot but be sinfulness as soon as the intelligent mind and spirit supervene. All things will lie in the sensitive nature, as it is transmitted and conveyed in that state, that when the reasonable and intelligent spirit supervenes, though the sensitive nature (as such) is not capable of sin, yet supervening and coming into union, there cannot but a sinfulness ensue. And,

(4.) We have further to consider to this purpose, how manifest the power of imagination is, every where through the world. And so, how supposable it is, that the power of parental imagination may be great. And we find it is so, very frequently, to make an impression upon the grosser corporeal bulk. There are signatures upon the fœtus, as many unquestionable histories do inform us, that speak of parental imaginations. But much more may it be strong on the more fine sort of vehicles, in which we have very little reason to doubt, the reasonable soul is lodged, and invested with, whenever it comes into union with a terrestrial body. And it cannot be difficult, to apprehend what signatures parental imagination may make there, when the soul comes to act in a body so and so formed. I do not merely, now, speak of this corporeal external bulk, but that finer indument, that is, that immediate inwrapping of the soul in the body: and which, in all likelihood, it carries away with it out of the body whensoever it leaves it. What signatures may be there easily made by parental imagination, it is not hard for us to apprehend, if we let our thoughts work upon that subject, especially considering what impressions have been made upon the grosser or more corporeal bulk itself. And then consider,

(5.) The natural activity of the intelligent mind and spirit when it comes into union and supervenes, especially with respect to its cogitativeness, its thinkingness, its power to think; which how soon it doth exert, and put forth its power into act, we do not know: but, to be sure, as soon as its organs are capable, and as soon as it becomes, in its own nature, a cogitative or a thinking thing, nothing is more essential to it than a power of thought; so that as soon as it can use thought, it must; especially the organs that it depends upon, and is to act by, being so and so disposed before, it cannot be but there will be thinking amiss. And according to this course, as the power of using thought grows riper, it will be more and more irregular.

And here are the first ebullitions of corrupt nature. The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. As soon as he thinks, he will think vainly; he will think vanity, Psalm xciv. 11.—"And God saw that the imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil, and that continually," in that corrupt state of the world, Genesis vi. 5. And, "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." Where there is a corrupt heart, the first ebullitions of it are in impure thoughts, vain thoughts, sinful thoughts; that is, that such things, such kind of phantasies; are impressed, as do take their rise only from a sensible world; towards an unknown God who is invisible, there are no signatures that can have any power, because they are buried and overwhelmed by such a supervening cloud of sensitive images or imaginations, thereupon, there must be aversion from God, disaffection to him, disinclination towards him, as an unknown, and an unsuitable, and an undesirable Object. And so, here is the very root of all evil. So that he may easily see how it comes to have place, even in the corrupt nature of lapsed man. And then, again,

(6.) We are further to consider how industrious we must needs suppose the prince of the apostacy to be, for the continuation of that sin in the world, which he introduced into it. And that is a thing less considered in this matter than I think it should be, and doth claim to be. Plain it is, that the whole order of apostate men became apostate, by being accomplices with this great prince of the air. And so sinful men are more universally accomplices with hell, with the apostate prince of the darkness of this world. Nothing is plainer: and do but consider, hereupon, what the parentage of a sinner is, as a sinner; "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do," John viii. 44. They are the words of him who is truth itself, and who, therefore, cannot deceive us. Now in what respects do we think that the devil is called the father of sinners? Not in respect of their mere nature, not in respect of their naturals, the substance either of their souls, or of their bodies, but only in respect of their morals, the sinfulness, the corruption, the impurity of them. But is he a father in respect of this? Then, certainly, it must owe its beginnings, in individuals, to him too; as children do owe their beginning, wherein they are children, to their parents.

And let but that context be observed, 1 John v. 18, 19. "He that is born of God, keepeth himself, that the wicked one toucheth him not." Therefore, this is a divine birth; there is a self-preserving principle conveyed with that divine nature which is new born, that the wicked one shall not touch him; that is, mortally to touch him; not touch him so as to kill him; but he hath touched mortally all the rest. And, therefore, the apostle adds in the very next words, "we are of God," to wit, new-born of God: an elliptical expression: the word *being born*, having been before used, it was enough to say, we are of God; born of God. But how is the case with the rest of the world? They "all lie in wickedness," we read it; in all likelihood it should be read, "in that wicked one," spoken of before, in that foregoing word; that is, in the wicked one, who can only touch those that are born of God; but doth mortally touch the rest.

And thereupon, we find that the common course of the unregenerate and unconverted world, it is said to be after "the power of the prince of the air, that works in the children of disobedience," Ephes. ii. 2. Whereupon, in the very next words, they are said to be children of wrath too, by nature. Observe how things lie connected; "and are by nature children of wrath." By nature, how so? Inasmuch as there is a corrupt and depraved nature continually descending and transmitted; wherein we are not to suppose him to be without his advantage, or without his agency, who is "the prince of the darkness of this world," and who is also called "the God of this world," 2 Cor. iv. 4.

And it is not, therefore, strange, that men should be as to all their concerns, so much subject to the diabolical power, because they have been accomplices with him from the beginning, even the first apostacy; when nobody can suppose (that considers matters equally) but that he must be

continually intent to keep his ground in this world; and doth all that in him lies, to transmit impurity from age to age. And his advantage, in order hereunto, upon the sensitive nature, cannot but be great. Though he cannot immediately touch the mind and spirit itself, without its own consent, without its own betraying itself; yet, that power variously actuates the sensitive nature; and thereby, the inferior appetite, and whatsoever is in the lower region of the soul; (this is no unapprehensible thing;) to wit, to cherish sin, and to foment and cherish it the same way, by the mediation of sense by which he first introduced it. And, by sense, we are not to understand only the external sense, but we are to understand, under that notion, whatsoever lies within the compass of sensitive nature, imagination and appetite, as well as the external sense. And what signatures he may make upon it, is more easy for us to apprehend as possible, than to conclude as certain; but very likely it is, that his power may go very far; and we are not to doubt but his malice will go as far as his power. And then, I add upon all this,

12. That there being such a sinful pravity conveyed and descending down with our nature, from age to age, this must, in the beginning thereof, be matter of just displeasancy to the blessed God. It cannot be, but there must be aversion in his holy and pure nature, to a nature impure and unholy. And let us but consider this, that we are said to be, (as was taken notice of before,) "by nature, the children of wrath," lying under the divine displeasure, under a *vindicta*, even by nature, Ephes. ii. 2, 3. And pray, let the reason of the thing be a little discussed and looked into. Consider whether that various inclination and disposition, before actual sin, be not in itself a hateful thing. And that nothing which is asserted, among those that have inquired into and do profess the truth in this matter, may appear harsh and hard, let us but consider how such matters used to be judged of by human measures, by men; sure, in things wherein they will not censure men, we may think God more uneensurable. If men will allow themselves the liberty of free thought, they cannot deny it. But whereas, there is such a thing as human justice, pray do but consider how it useth to have its exercise in matter of punishment, and upon what ground. And whereas, all men have some natural notions remaining with them of right and wrong, and they have aversion or propension, according to such notions, more or less, do but consider how these do work among men, considered as men. Let me but set your thoughts on work on the latter of these first; that is, take a virtuous person, one that goes under that common estimate, by all that know him, as a person of strict virtue. Will he not, as such, disaffect an ill man, a vicious and wicked man? And you will say, he instinctively doth so; that is, the wickedness he sees in him. But then, I would inquire, What is it that such a one disaffects, in such another? Is it, I say, any abstract act he doth? That can never be; for that, abstracted or prescinded from an evil inclination, is not the thing that he hates or can hate; that any man can reasonably hate, for an act, an external act, that falls under the notice of another, take it off from an evil inclination, it is but a casual thing; and it is morally neither good nor evil; and therefore, can be no object of a rational hatred. Therefore, whatsoever there is of just hatred in the vilest and most profligate person's course, what is the object of that just hatefulness? Not the external acts, abstractly considered, from a vicious inclination; but as they proceed thence, or as they are supposed to proceed thence. So that it is an ill habit of mind, of a vicious mind, that is the object of hatred, every where, with virtuous men.

And then, consider, what it is that human laws do punish, in the next place. Who do they punish? Do they punish the external action abstractly from the evil inclination or intention? Never at all; for if it doth appear that there was an action done against the rule of the law, that doth not proceed from an ill inclination or intention, it is looked upon as a casual thing, and not punishable. Therefore, the thing that is punishable, is the ill intention and disposition, only discovering itself by such and such external acts. This is plain in itself.

But now, whereas, we have no way to know the inclinations of men's minds, but by external *indicia*, the disposition and habitude of every one lie immediately open to the divine inspection; there is all the difference. If then, there be a just and reasonable ground to hate an ill disposition, an ill inclination, because it doth discover itself by external acts to us, why is there not the same reason that it should be hated, or that it should be matter of displeasure, whenever it appears, unto him by whom things are immediately seen in themselves, and as they lie without external discovery? And therefore, a sinful generation is called "a generation of vipers." You have poison, you have malignity in your natures. This he can see, that sees all things, and knows all things, before it doth *se prodere*, before it discovers itself in sinful actions, before it appears to our view, before it can be discerned by us. And therefore, consider further,

13. Which will be a further proof of the former, and contribute further towards our common end, the clearing of difficulties in this matter, that it is plain, that infants, as soon as they come to partake of the human nature, they do need a Redeemer, as much as others; for I hope there is none among us that is such a *durus infantum pater*, so hard and harsh a father of infants, but to admit, that many infants may be saved, may become blessed creatures hereafter. Well, but how shall they come to be so without a Redeemer, without a Christ? Is not he said to be "the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world?" Whatsoever sins of the world that are taken away, they are taken away by him. But what! are infants no part of the world? They are said to compose the kingdom of God in this world; that is, concur to the composition. "Suffer little children to be brought unto me, for of such is the kingdom of God." Those that were brought in arms, that were carried, of them it is said, "of such is the kingdom of God;" that kingdom whereof our Lord Jesus Christ is the immediate King. He takes them into his kingdom. They come under the government of the Redeemer; then they did need a Redeemer, and to be dealt with in a way of grace, and not merely upon a natural point. They are a part of that body which he gave himself to purchase and sanctify, Ephes. v. 25, 26. And it is plain,

14. That they do need to be regenerated; they need regeneration as well as redemption; and which, indeed, hath its foundation in redemption; "for that which is born of the flesh is but flesh," and no more; but "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and that Spirit is the Spirit of Christ: and if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his. And therefore, I would subjoin to all these considerations, in the last place,

15. That whatsoever God thought fit not to do, by way of prevention of the coming of sin into the world, and of its being transmitted in it, he hath done with more unspeakably glorious advantage, by way of remedy. And the remedy for setting things right, where things were out of course, in the apostate world, it is two ways. The one whereof doth more directly respect us, and the other himself; that is, by redemption, and the penal judgment. These two things will set all things right. I cannot now enlarge as I would; but very true it is indeed, that it must mightily pose, nonplus all our understandings, if there were to be continual descent of our sinful generation one after another in this world eternally. If things were to run on thus to all eternity, it were the most unaccountable thing imaginable. But we find this is not to be; there will be a period put to this course within awhile. This world, and the wickedness of it, must come to an end; and while sin is running on, from age to age, grace hath its exercise too, which runs a parallel, from age to age. And therefore, there is a far more glorious display of all the divine perfections in the appointed means of remedy, than there would have been in the prevention of those great disorders that have been in the world, by sin's once entering into it, and continuing a course in it so long.

LECTURE XXXIX.*

My design (as you have heard) in choosing the text I have been upon for some time, was not to speak of the corruption of human nature abstractly, and in itself, but to consider it here as it stands in connexion with the acknowledged justice and righteousness of God; and so to make that my business, to vindicate God's justice in reference to this case,—a continual transmission of a corrupt nature, in this world, from age to age, that draws death and misery after it, and which God permits to run on in such a course; though (as hath been told you) if we did consider omnipotency abstractly, and absolutely, it might be supposed easy for him to have hindered it. To this I have spoken at large, and will repeat nothing more, than only to take notice of so much, as the sum of all, that whatsoever is, with the most plausibleness, wont to be alleged against the righteousness of the divine procedure in this matter, doth lie, for the most part, in men's taking such and such things for granted, as if they were certainly so; which are most uncertain, and whereof (whereas all men do all they can) they must be, in a great measure, ignorant; if such had but the modesty to confess the ignorance which they cannot cure or remedy, the justice of God, in permitting all men to come into the world with sinful natures, would appear in glorious light and lustre before their eyes, darkened with no cloud; nor would these dash in the dark one against another, but be easily conceived in their minds, without the least appearance of repugnancy to one another. As we see lie in the Psalmist's, who, in almost the same breath, confesseth the triumphant justice and righteousness of God, and the corruption of that nature that did descend to him, and doth descend from man to man, and from age to age.

But now, it only remains to make *Use* of what hath been said upon this very important subject. And herein, considering one of the things considered and asserted, by itself, to wit, the corruption of the nature, which is conveyed and transmitted down from parents to children. The first use that I shall hereupon make will be this—To show how greatly they are concerned, who are parents, or who may be so, to their uttermost to strive against this radical evil that is descending and running down, from age to age, in this world which we inhabit, and whereof we are the sinful inhabitants. This is a thing which, in the notion, we generally acknowledge, that there is such a descent of corruption and sinfulness, from age to age, in this world. But even where this truth is admitted, it is a truth hid and shut up in unrighteousness, while the hearts of very few are in any measure suitably affected and influenced to take that course, pursuant and agreeable to so plain and so confessed a truth as this is. It is that which, where it is understood and acknowledged, and were it understood and acknowledged all the world over it ought universally to have the same effect, ought to startle the world, to awaken men every where, as if there were a universal plague spread over all towns, cities, countries, and kingdoms, at once. And if that were the case, that any poor creature could not tell whither to go, or where to set his foot, secure and free from the danger of meeting such a shaft or arrow that should immediately pierce his very heart, in what a condition were this world, if thus it were with every one! But there is a thousand-fold worse mischief to be feared; and they that think of flying from it, carry it about them, and can no more fly from it than they can fly from themselves, or run away from their own nature. It is not considered, that they carry sin, and death, and hell, about them, even from their very original; things complicated with their natures. Who would pretend to believe so horrid a truth, a truth of so horrid and tremendous import, and not be filled with horror about it? Yet, every one goes on unconcerned, as if there were no fear, no danger, no harm, about them, or before them. But, I say,

First, All should understand, hence, that are, or may be, parents, of how unspeakable concernment it is to them, to counterstrive to the uttermost against this great mischief which they are, or are like to be, instruments of; transmitting sin in this world, and conveying it yet further down from this to another generation in it. And this I take to be a head, upon this occasion, fit to be enlarged upon; and therefore, I shall spend this hour upon it. And therein shall show you—Wherein such as are, or may be, parents, should use their endeavour to counterwork this radical evil; and then—Upon what considerations they should be awakened and engaged effectually hereunto.

I. Wherein they should endeavour against it, who are, or may be, parents. Why,

(1.) By endeavouring, out of hand, to become seriously godly themselves; so that if ever God call them, or order things so in reference to themselves, and that they become parents, as a corrupt seed will more or less spring from them, they may be the means, also, of raising up a godly seed in this world. The thing which God hath designed even in the first founding of families upon this earth: that whereas, a corrupt nature, if ever they come to be parents, will descend from them, without their design, they may be also instruments, in the hand of God, of conveying his image, his light, his grace, with their own design, in subordination (as all instruments must be) to the Supreme Agent, that alone can make them capable of being effectual ones to such a blessed end.

That, I say, must be their first care in order hereunto; that is, out of hand, to endeavour to become godly themselves: to do what is possible for them to do in order thereunto: not content themselves that they have an empty, spiritless form of godliness about them, that is never likely to be active to such a purpose: but that there be the life and power of godliness, which will be active to the uttermost it is capable of, in pursuance of so high and great a design. As, naturally, men are generally the devil's instruments, to promote his dark and impure kingdom in this world; so, if ever God call me to the state and condition of a parent, I will, through his grace, be his instrument, as much as in me, to promote that holy kingdom, which he hath formed, and is intent to promote and propagate in this world, as a counter-kingdom, against the power of that wicked kingdom.

In order hereunto, under that manifestation God is pleased to make of himself through Christ in the Gospel, they ought to surrender and give up themselves to God in Christ: herein becoming godly doth first begin when, under the convictive and operative light of influence and grace transmitted in the Gospel, persons do make a surrender of themselves to God through Christ. "Yield yourselves unto God," as the expression is, Rom. vi. 13. It is but a practical answer to God's claim and challenge—"Yield yourselves to God." He demands his right; he insists upon his interest in you, as you are his creatures, and the work of his hands. And what! will you not yield, not yield him his own? Will you withhold from him what is his? what he hath so indisputably a title to, and interest in? Or, can you ever have a design of helping to raise up a godly seed in this world, if you will never be godly yourself? but remain a continual fighter against God, and a striver against him, under that Gospel of peace and grace, wherein he is continually bespeaking you to be his? And then,

(2.) Let such as may be parents of children, lay the more immediate foundation of such an endeavour, as I have been speaking of, in marrying after a godly sort: in marrying holily, whensoever any are called thereunto; that is, with a design for God. He that is the Author, is to be the End of all things. And whereas that same state is his institution and appointment, it is a most insolent absurdity, for any to take upon them, as if they were to please themselves, or to gratify an inclination, or serve an interest of their own, with neglect of God's great interest. They that enter, or think of entering, into that state, are required to do it in the Lord, as an only thing, 1 Cor. vii. 39. And it is a great deal of pity, that discourses about such matters, and relating to this affair, are so generally confined to a corner only, and that opportunity is not given of speaking to assemblies upon so important a matter as this is; that any undertaking or design, in this kind, is to be done in the Lord, and that as an only thing. Marry they may, only in the Lord. But when they neg-

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lect this, they leave out the only thing that can make a blessed marriage; which certainly must argue a very profane mind, when men and women dare venture, and rush upon a matter of so great importance as that, and leave out the very only thing that concerns them in it. This doing of such a thing in the Lord must import,

[1.] A doing it for him, with a design for him, to wit, as one's principal end. And let it be considered how great an aberration here is from the proper scope, generally, in the world, and even in the Christian world, as to this thing: that the first thing commonly thought of, is some such mean matter as this, in comparison mean, I say, in comparison; "I design to change my condition; well, let me think, then, how I can please my fancy; let me contrive how I can best satisfy my sensual inclination; and how I can best serve my worldly interest and advantage; where to have a great fortune; and what may set me up into, and promote me in, the most advantageous way of trade, and the like."

What the evangelist says, in another case of our Lord's animadversion upon the scribes and Pharisees, that their religion stood in the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, neglecting the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God; to wit, that those other things they might and ought to have done, but not to have left the other undone: the like may be said in this case. There is no blame in looking after one suitable, in respect of comeliness, or in respect of fortune, or the like. This may well enough be done; but not to leave the great and most weighty matter and importance: that is, Where shall I have a suitable help to promote religion in the world, and to plant religion in a family, if it shall please God to make us the founders of a family? one that may help to bear a part with me in maintaining and keeping up the interest of godliness, in opposition to the common corruption of human nature, which is still descending from age to age in this world? How little is thought of amongst us, so as hereby to design the business of marriage for this in the Lord is the principal thing? When that is not made the principal thing, the very act is idolatry. To be the end of all things is appropriate to Deity: and he must be your Supreme End, even in this thing, or you make yourselves so; and if so, you are an idol of jealousy, set up against God; as if this world were made for you, and you were made for yourself; and as if you might take upon yourself to do what you please here, without reference to the Supreme Ruler and Lord of all. Therefore it is, without question, that he and his interest, in this affair, must be designed in the first place.

[2.] That in subserviency to it, whosoever designs to enter into that state, they must give themselves up by solemn covenant to God in Christ first. That is to do this thing in the Lord, which we are told is the only thing in this matter. And that is a most unaccountable piece of presumption, that people will take upon them to dispose of themselves, give themselves to one another, before they have ever given themselves to God through Christ, which is the first and most fundamental relation. You all ought to know you are not your own; you have nothing to do with yourselves, you have not yourselves to dispose of otherwise, but from, and by, and under, God. And therefore, give to him your own persons; give yourself to the Lord, in the first place, before you think of giving yourself to another. You have not power over yourselves, nor can dispose of yourselves. None have so much power over themselves, as that they ought to think of giving him or herself away without God; but for God; and therefore, the gift must be made to himself first; and that union with him be made fundamental, to that other subsequent and inferior union, much inferior.

But here it may be said, What, then, may only godly persons marry? or those only that are in covenant with God in Christ?

To that I will only say in short, and the business will then be clear enough. It is a question that will answer itself. You ought to give up yourselves to God through Christ, every one, the first thing you do, out of hand, without a moment's delay. For till this be done, you are in a state of rebellion against him; he lays his claim to us all upon a natural right, and upon the Redeemer's acquisition too, who died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord, Owner, and Ruler, of the living and dead; to wit, of all most absolutely.

Therefore, this is a thing not to be deferred a moment. So as if the question be, Hath a man sinned then, if he hath married while he was yet ungodly? I say, his sin doth not lie in what he hath done, but it lies in what he hath not done. It doth not lie in this, that you have married; but it lies in this, that you have not taken God for your God, and given up yourselves to God through Christ, to be his: here lies the sin. Marrying, abstractly and alone, is not a sin; nay, it is, in many cases, a duty: but then, there is a prior duty, a superior duty: therefore, none sin by marrying, barely, but his sin lies in not giving up himself to God, which he is under continual, momentary obligation to do. So that you are in a rebellion every moment you defer it; you keep from God his own right, his own treasure, that he hath made, and that he should be served by, as his own. And that is the case, which neither deserves nor needs any further answer. But,

(3.) The design of religion to be, to our uttermost, kept up, from age to age, in this world, is to be served, as much as is possible, by those that have the prospect of being parents in their agreed resolution with themselves, whenever God shall give them posterity, to temper and qualify their complacency herein, with that grief, sorrow, and concern, and fear, which the case itself challengeth, lest there should be a transmitting of corrupt and sinful nature, without a due subsequent endeavour to remedy what they could not prevent. There ought to be, I say, a joint agreement and resolution between such, if ever God give them posterity, to qualify and temper the complacency commonly taken herein, with that just mixture of concern, grief, and fear; that since there is a corrupt nature conveyed, lest it should go alone, or remain alone; and a holy divine nature not be communicated, too, through any neglect on their part, when God doth give them opportunity of treating and dealing with such, who shall have sprung from them, in order to this end. There ought to be a great and deep concern of mind and spirit to this purpose; that whereas, commonly, when a child is born, all that is considered in such a case, is, that now such a family is likely to be built up; and they take great complacency in it, that there is an offspring arisen to them: but this complacency is without that mixture and qualification, which the state of the case, as it is in itself, doth challenge. For it ought to be considered, We have been the instruments of bringing into the world a sinful creature, an impure creature, a guilty creature; one that is a child of wrath by nature. The complacency that is taken in having posterity, should not drown or swallow up such just considerations as these are, which, being entertained, may have their due effect, and proper influence, to excite to that subsequent duty which will be incumbent upon such parents. And,

(4.) Such parents ought to endeavour a most entire agreement in, and understanding of, a solemn and early dedication and devoting of such, their issue, to God. This ought to be done understandingly, solemnly, and early. And the parents ought to agree to give God his right in their child; that as it is by nature a child of wrath, it may be, by grace, an heir of merey; they doing what in them is incumbent in order thereunto; they taking hold of God's covenant, which is not a nullity; and it is profane to think it so. And indeed, nothing doth more betray the interest of God, and Christ, and godliness, and Christianity, in the world, than the slight and trifling management of the important affairs of baptism; that it is so little understood; and that men play with it as they do; and as they do also with that of marriage; as if it were matter of sport, when it is one of the things of the greatest importance in all the world. But it ought to be considered, here is a creature corrupt and impure, it is true, but in which God hath the first and proper right; it belongs to him, and he can make this impure creature a holy creature. And I offer it to him upon his own claim, and challenge, and the engagement of his word, in order thereunto, that he may do so. Herein parents should agree: "We dedicate to thee what thou hast given us, more thine than ours. We have had our contribution to the impurity of it: we can only hope

to have it made a pure and holy creature by thy holy, gracious, and vital influences, in thine own way and time imparted and communicated to it." And it is upon this account that parents are sanctified to one another; though but one should be a believer, that what springs from them should be holy; that is, by a federal holiness, related to God, and capable of being devoted to him, 1 Cor. vii. 11. And then,

(5.) Pursuantly to such a devoting of their little ones to God, it ought to be a joint agreement between parents, that their first care should be taken about their minds. "Now, here is a little one to be brought up, to be educated:" this should be said as a fundamental resolution, by agreement, and consent of parents. "Our first care should be about the mind of this little one, if it live to be a capable subject of our education and instruction; that is it we will first be chiefly concerned about. For this is an intelligent and immortal part; this is the seat of God's holy image, if ever it shall be produced; and it is itself his natural image: for as it is a mind, or hath a mind, so it is a spiritual and intelligent being, and is like God naturally, and his very offspring, upon this account, who is pleased to style himself, 'the Father of spirits, and the God of the spirits of all flesh;' of those spirits that dwell so meanly as in flesh. And therefore, that ought to be the agreed and resolved first care; that our principal concernment be about the minds of our little ones." The care that is commonly most of all taken, is about the outward man, and the external concernments of our posterity: they love to see them fair, comely, beautiful, healthful, strong, vigorous; wish to see them have straight limbs, and the like; but do not care how crooked dispositions they have. This is unaccountable, and detestable, that it should be thus with a reasonable creature; those that are capable of understanding the differences of things; and of how much greater importance one thing is than another. But this, I say, ought to be the first care, and should be the agreement between parents, (with dependance upon the grace of God,) about the minds of our little ones. And,

(6.) In order hereunto, there ought to be a very diligent observation made of them, to see what their natural temper is, or is like to prove, which will discover itself to an observing eye, by early indications, one way or other: that is, whether my child is likely to prove dull or docile; whether it is likely to prove mild and meek, or froward and peevish; whether it is likely to prove tractable or intractable; whether it is likely to prove mean and low spirited, or great and high spirited. These different dispositions will soon and early appear to observing eyes. Such notices should be taken by prudent parents, and must be by conscientious ones, who have a design for the good of their families, that they may know how to acquit themselves in after-times accordingly. Some children will discover more of a natural timorousness; others will discover more boldness and venturousness, and that very early. And careful observation should be made of the temper as it doth more early *prodere se, discover itself*, offer itself to view and observation, that there may be suitable measures taken, for prudent applications afterwards, as the case shall require. And then, again.

(7.) Resolutions ought to be taken between parents, and especially the mothers, (whose part will be more about the child in its more tender years,) to watch against any sinful inclinations, one way or other, as they shall discover themselves. If there be any appearance of falsehood, of wrathfulness, of envy or revengefulness, of pride or haughtiness, in children, to animadvert upon these betimes. And especially if immoderate desires after any thing; only it ought to be distinguished, whether it be the desire of that which is necessary for it, or a desire only of that which curiosity may prompt to desire. That which is necessary for it must be had; but not upon its first signification of a desire; that it may be made to understand betimes, dependance and subjection. And that the less it hath of understanding of its own, the more it is to be managed by the parent's understanding; and the having, even of necessary things, is not to be the reward of demanding them, or asking for them.

But for unlawful inclinations, they are to be checked, with all the care and industry imaginable very early; any such as I have instanced in, or whatsoever besides can be instanced in; repress the beginnings of these things, as you would the beginnings of a disease that would prove mortal to your child. And it is this neglect (especially in mothers) that ripens such evils as these, thus radicated in the very natures of children, till they are incurable; till they be past cure. And that makes so many bills, as in a desperate case, to be sent in to us. It is a far easier thing to send in a bill to a minister, when a child is spoiled and ruined in its tender years, than it is constantly to watch over them, and repress their ill inclinations betimes, and make them understand government, and subjection, and dependance, in their early days. But where the will of the child is the law of the family, and must govern all, no wonder if plagues and mischiefs, of this kind, are introduced and brought into families by this means.

Divine wisdom hath taught us in such cases how to understand the matter aright. "He that spares the rod hates his son:" fond parents think it love; but divine wisdom calls it hatred. And therefore, is the advice, in that same book, Proverbs xix. 18. "Let not thy soul spare for his crying." What! because he cries will you throw him into hell, will you abandon him to destruction? Not that there needs much of frequent severity, where there is a due prudence used in reference to such cases. I have known children brought up to men and women's estate, that never had a blow in their lives; nor was it needful. It would not be needful, if there were a steady awfulness in the deportment of parents towards them, so that they might, upon any thing that were really a miscarriage, understand a frown, a rebuke, a strange look. If there were that prudence used, that might be used, there would be little need of harshness and severity, unless upon very ill temper indeed; and they must be dealt with accordingly.

But where all the care is to indulge a humour, and please the child; and where there is a disposition in parents, many times, to be proud of the ill dispositions of their children, as they appear in them, how many ill tempers are made worse! And how many good tempers are spoiled by this means! And the guilt and future miseries of the children will cry against their parents, not only in this world, but, perhaps, in the other too. And the truth is, parents would show a great deal more mercy in that which is commonly reckoned harshness and severity: nay, I say, they would not be reckoned so cruel in breaking their children's limbs, in tearing their flesh, in pulling out their eyes, as they commonly are, in indulging their vicious, sinful dispositions and inclinations in them, without a timely endeavour of cure, wherein the seed of those miseries are sown, and spring up so in this world, and in the other too. Again,

(8.) They ought, in pursuance of the mentioned end, to instil the principles of religion betimes. Teach them betimes who made them, that great Supreme Being who is the Maker and Author of all things; teach them reverence and subjection to him: speak awfully before them, so as never to take that great name in vain; so as that your fear, your own fear, of the great God, whose name you bear, may be exemplary to them: as Jacob swore by the fear of his father, Isaac, when the important solemnity of the occasion called for an oath. Jacob had observed what Isaac's reverence of God was, and so called him "my father's fear." O teach your children to know God as their parents' fear. And so the other great principles of religion besides, which they are capable of understanding (if there be a due and diligent application) earlier than is thought; earlier than is commonly thought, at least: but the sooner the better: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Labour to season him betimes: so the wickedness of a corrupt nature is to be counterwrought. And then,

(9.) Pray much for them. You that are, or may be, parents, as you are so, or upon that prospect, let this be a matter of great concern between God and you. Pour out your souls in your closets, upon this account; especially such of you to whom God hath given children. And be sure,

(10.) To set up and keep up family worship, family religion. Let this be an agreed thing between you; that as holy, good Joshua resolved, "I and my house will serve the Lord, whatever others do, we will serve the Lord." As

a corrupt nature comes by birth, and wickedness springs up so, so it is nourished and cherished, in great part, by the ungodliness of parents. In families where there is no calling on the name of the Lord, O how doth it thrive! That wickedness that is natural, how doth it grow and improve in an irreligious family, a profane family! So doth the wickedness of this world grow, the wickedness of England, the wickedness of London. And the misery thereof is growing *pari passu, with an equal pace.* And if dreadful calamities are coming upon us, coming upon the land, coming upon this city, we have reason to apprehend here is the very source of all the mischief, even family profaneness. God is banished out of the families of the most: and what will this come to?

I desire to bless God for it, that the ministers of this city, such as are united, and are wont to meet weekly, about the common concernments of their congregations, are awakened into a sense of this great and growing evil; and they have resolved to use their utmost endeavours to awaken the people of their several charges and congregations, about this very thing. And (God willing) you will have more of it ere it be long; that I believe there will be such a joint, agreed, common cry in London, against the wicked neglect of the worship of God in families, as hath not been for many an age past. I hope there will. And know, it is an agreed thing, that there shall, at some one time, and, as near as may be, all about the same time. And so will, I hope, the faithful servants of Christ (at least) deliver their own souls. Yea, I hope God will bless this to be a means of great reformation in this city.

For the evil as is feared (at least it is said to be matter of observation with some, for my part, I know it not, but it is matter of fear with many) is, that a great many professors of religion make no conscience at all of any such thing as family duty; but prodigally throw away that time otherwise, which should be spent in the solemn worship of God in their families, with those of whom he hath committed the care and charge to them. And if what is designed happen, and do not produce a thorough and general reformation among us, it will produce a vindication of that justice, of that severity, which we are to expect. For God will not be dallied with always; and, I doubt, not much longer. That which hath been a seat of religion eminently in the world, in the eye of the past times, that religion, should languish and dwindle in it, as it doth by the neglect of family government, even by persons professing godliness, and who would be counted a godly sort of people, is a very sad consideration.

LECTURE XL.*

Secondly, I would now add some considerations to enforce what I have been pleading with you about. And,

1. That which is obvious in the text—"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Parents, they have transmitted a corrupt nature to their children. Into what agonies of spirit should it put us, to think with ourselves, "I have been an instrument in producing an heir of wrath, and of a divine curse. O! shall I use no endeavour to draw it under a blessing, and make it the subject of blessedness, now that we live under that Gospel, in which we are called to blessedness?" But that call must be pursued; and God expects it should be so, in apt and suitable methods and applications, by such as he makes use of as instruments, one way or another. whether in private or more public stations, in order thereunto. And,

2. Consider God's original, supreme, and sovereign interest in families, as he is the Founder of them, and as they are his plantation. "He sets the solitary in families," Psalm lxviii. 6. Consider this, together with the design of his forming of them; to wit, that he might have a godly seed still arising, from age to age, as you may see in that Malachi ii. 15. It was the very end and design of that fundamental relation in families, and unto families, the conjugal relation: "Wherefore did he make but one, when he had the residue of the Spirit? Why, that he might seek a godly seed." As if it had been said, These plantations are mine. This the constitution of families (in which the conjugal relation is the fundamental relation) speaks, upon the first design of settling such a constitution as this. There lay open (as we must but be sure) to the foresight of the divine eye, what a general apostacy and defection there would be; and that a corrupt nature would be transmitted, from age to age, from generation to generation. But God did determine with himself not, therefore, to abandon all to one common ruin; as if he should have said, "I will have an interest in this world, notwithstanding." And therefore, as this was the original design of the constitution of families, that he might have a godly seed, though the apostacy had intervened, he will not quit his design; for his interest is still the same in its own nature. And therefore, this we must understand him continually to insist upon, as a sacred right to himself; that he will have this design pursued by all that will be subject to him, that will return into their state of subjection, and be willing to serve him in the several stations that he hath set them. He will have all endeavours used for transmitting of religion, as well as corrupt and sinful nature is transmitted, from age to age; though the one is done by a natural, the other is done by instituted means, followed with a blessing, and by influence from above: he will have this latter design carried on by the mutual and joint endeavours of parents, under the influence of his grace; as well as the former course is carried on unavoidably. But when no care or concern is had about this, the foundations of families are laid in a curse. And then,

3. Consider, that it cannot but concern parents, such as are such, or may be so, to express a natural affection, and to endeavour to have that improved, by having it spiritualized, and improved to a spiritual purpose, as well as they are the means by which a natural corruption is conveyed, and transmitted to their posterity. "They have natural corruption from me; (they ought to think;) and shall there be nothing of natural affection? And shall I not labour to have that natural affection sublimated, and spiritualized, and improved, so as to aim at their spiritual and supernatural good? Shall they have nothing from me, but sin and death? or nothing besides the human nature which they have from me; nothing but what shall corrupt and spoil, make it the subject and seed-plot of sin against God, and misery to themselves?" If there be any thing of natural affection working downward with the descent of natural corruption, that natural affection should aim at the true good of them whom nature hath so much endeared; and should, upon that account, take in the *auxilia*, draw in the aids and helps from heaven, by which that natural affection will become spiritualized; and so the more sincerely and entirely aim at, and the more fervently pursue, a design for the spiritual and eternal good of those who descended and sprung from us. And,

4. It is to be considered, what an honour this doth derive upon the persons themselves, that shall be instrumental in this design. A glorious thing it is, to be a servant to God in so great a work as this; to recover out of the state of apostacy those that come into that state by our means; to be an instrument, in the hand of God, to promote his kingdom in this world, in opposition to the dark kingdom of the infernal powers. How glorious a thing is it, to carry on a designed opposition against the work of the devil in this world! that when we know the aim and purpose of the great God is to have, in all successions of time, a people for his name, I should be instrumental in promoting it! It is an honourable thing, a thing that draws a glory upon the persons, and upon the families, where religion doth thus come to take place, to take root, and is planted, and doth flourish. And again,

5. It speaks an agreement and sameness, in a great measure, of mind and design, with the Redeemer. For he is to have his seed in this world, from which his word and Spirit are never to depart; Isaiah lix. latter end. And the matter is settled, by everlasting covenant, as you find it there: "This is my covenant, (saith the Lord,) My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put

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in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever." And so we know it hath been an agreed thing, as the matter is stated, (Isaiah liii. 11.) between the Father and him, that he shall see his seed, and the travail of his soul, and be satisfied therein: and that, as a recompense for his having undertaken the work of redemption, and accomplishing it, upon terms so painful, so expensive, so dolorous, so ignominious to himself. As if the Father had said to him, "Thou shalt have all this, this reward; thou shalt see thy seed, and the travail of thy soul, and be satisfied therein." Upon this, our Lord Jesus Christ cannot but be most intent, to see a continual seed spring up to him, out of a seed of evil-doers, out of an apostate race of men. Now, if we be intent upon this thing, it bespeaks a sameness of mind and design, between the Redeemer and us: which, how pleasant, how delightful, how comfortable, should it be to our reflecting thoughts! And again,

6. It is further to be considered, that if there be no such design to promote godliness in families, that that may be transmitted from age to age, (though in a distinct and diverse way,) as the corrupt and sinful nature is transmitted, then, we cannot but be doing our part to the promoting of ungodliness in the world ourselves. We shall do that, and nothing besides, nothing in opposition thereunto. For do but consider, as the case stands between God and man, there can be no medium between being for godliness and being for ungodliness; we cannot be in an indifferency. If we are not, according to the uttermost of our power and capacity, for transmitting and continuing of godliness in the world, we must be for the continuing of ungodliness. A horrid and fearful thought, if any would but allow it to take place! They can only be in an indifferency, in reference to any case whatsoever, that have no real concern therein, one way or other. But here every one is concerned; and he must take a part: he must be for the promoting of godliness, or promoting its contrary. And therefore,

7. According to this state of things in the world, they that do aim to contribute nothing to the transmitting of religion and godliness in the world, in opposition to the corruption of nature, which is so generally spreading through it, they are continually providing that there may be a war and rebellion continued and kept on foot, against heaven, from age to age, and from generation to generation. "He that is not with me is against me," saith the Lord. If you will not take God's side in this matter, you are fighting against him, and labour to do all that you can, that the rebellion against him may not cease; but that there may be still a succession of new rebels, new enemies, from one age to another. And,

8. You will herein, too, be constant accomplices and confederates with the prince of the apostacy; he that first fell from God, and that made it his design to involve all the world in the transgression, and in the consequent ruin; you will be continual accomplices with him. And this is, indeed, the state of every one's case, in these matters. Whoever will but consider with himself, if he be come to the use of his understanding, and hath some prospect (though uncertain) of a life's time to be run out in this world, he will find the world divided between two great lords, two great masters, two great fathers: that is, the true and rightful Lord of all, he that made all, and to whom all belong; and that usurping prince of darkness, who is called, "the god of this world," and whose children and seed wicked men (as such) are said to be. Why, every man, upon the prospect of entering upon the scene, the stage of this world, is to think with himself, "I must, in this case, either be with God or against God. If I be not with God, if I be against him, I am with that horrid usurped power, that is set up in opposition to him, with this world: and I fall in with that common destroyer, against the common Maker and Preserver of all things." This will be the state of your case, if you be not intent upon a design of counterworking this common corruption, which is descending in this world; you will be looked upon under no other notion but as an accomplice of hell against heaven. And,

9. You will herein falsify with God, after you have solemnly vowed and covenanted by your Christian parents. You have ordinarily been devoted and dedicated to God in baptism. To deal falsely and treacherously with a man, against the tenor of a covenant, is a horrid thing; but to break faith with God is much more horrid!

But you will say, You made no such vow; and what your parents did for you, how should that bind you? Why,

(1.) It is very great ignorance to think that parents cannot bind their children to any thing. Those that have the nearest natural interest in you, and whose understandings and wills are to be employed for you, when you have no understanding and will to use of your own, do you think they from whom you sprang have not a natural interest in you? How unreasonable and absurd a thought is that! In reference to all other concerns besides, have parents no disposal of their children? And may they dispose of them, or do for or with them otherwise, and may they not dispose of them for their spiritual good? And again,

(2.) It is every where counted a very horrid and barbarous thing, to endeavour to rescind the lawful act of a parent, if it were in my power, if I could do it. If I could alienate, or alter, what he hath so and so disposed; and if he have righteously disposed of it for me, to come after and labour to rescind and undo all that he hath done—this is barbarous and infamous, in common estimate, among men. And,

(3.) It must needs be much more so as to God, or if he be concerned in the matter. As now for instance, Suppose a pious person, with an honest mind and design, hath dedicated such a part or portion of his estate to a pious use; suppose it be not mere charity, but a pious charity, that is, not designed for a superstitious use, but for a use truly pious, and to serve the interest of God and religion in the world; and a son comes after, and he labours to undo all this; you that would think it horrid, to alienate a piece of earth, dedicated to God by your parents, ought you not to think it horrid, to alienate a soul from God, which hath, as much as in them was, been dedicated to God by them too; I would not alienate a piece of earth, dedicated to God; but I would alienate myself, my soul, my body, dedicated to him. This no man should (if he had power) alienate. What was dedicated and sacred to a use truly pious, may not be alienated; and if not a portion of his estate, much less himself so dedicated, and given to God. But yet, further,

(4.) It is to be said, that as this was not to be done, if it were in his power, so he cannot have such a thing in his power, to wit, in his rightful power; for every one was a debtor of his whole life and being, his soul and body, and his all to God, antecedently to any such dedication. And therefore, when such a tender is made to God, it was but to tender and devote to him what was his own by a more early title. "All souls are mine;" so he lays his claim universally to all the souls of men; and therein to the whole of them; for what are they besides a soul? what that is valuable or considerable besides? "All souls are mine, as well as the soul of the father, as the soul of the son," Ezekiel xviii. 4. He hath a nearer interest in them than a parent could have, before any such dedication; for a parent was not the parent of their spirit. They are the fathers of our flesh; but he himself is the Father of spirits; the principal and most considerable thing that we have about us, or that belongs to our being. And therefore, when such a dedication was made, there was only a tender made to God, of what was his before; of what he claims an interest in originally. He is the Father of them, and they are his offspring. And again, further,

(5.) This, in answer to that, is to be considered, that though inclination to good do not descend, yet obligation to it doth descend, from fathers to children, and from the predecessors in a family unto their successors. Not only obligations of justice and common right, but obligations of kindness and friendship. As, how ordinary is it for friendships and amities to descend from father to son, in families. And it is looked upon as a rude kind of thing, to be uncivil to my father's friend. And on which side, between families, among whom hath been a friendship, it first begins to fail, it always lies as an imputation upon that side. Great amity there was between such and such

families; but now it is at an end, since such and such successors are sprung up there. On whose side the failure is, there commonly lies a very ill character. And it is a thing contrary to the dictates of common wisdom,—yea, and of the divine wisdom. "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not," Prov. xxvii. 10. But how much less then, thy God, and thy father's God! If it be an indecency, and uncomeliness, and a very unfit thing, that is, contrary to the precept of studying whatsoever is lovely, and thinking of those things, to forsake my friend, and my father's friend, how much more horrid must it be to forsake my God, and my father's God! "My father's God shall not be my God!"

And therefore it is not so light a matter, as is commonly thought, to have the weight of that early dedication, lying upon one's score as a violated thing; as having dealt falsely in that covenant of God. Indeed, it is not only an evidence, but a cause of the languishment of religion in our days, that this is a thing so little thought of among Christians; "I was devoted to God early, given up to him with great solemnity; having these venerable names,—the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Ghost, named upon me, at my setting forth into the world." It speaks an apprehension of that thing itself, as if it were trivially done at first, if we make a trifle of it all our days afterwards: as if such a solemn transaction between the great Lord of heaven and earth, and his own dust, his own creatures, the works of his hands, were to be so lightly made of. Therefore, take we the weight of this upon our spirits. If we do not do, in our several stations and capacities, our uttermost to counterwork this descending evil in the world, we do falsify the sacred covenant of God, in which we were early and preventingly bound to him, by the vow of parents concerning us. And then,

10. It is the way, certainly, for us to lose all the comfort of domestical relations, when we are not driving on this design in our several stations; we lose by it all the comforts of family relations. For what comfort can I take in having such and such relations, in a family, when in the mean time, there is a contrariety, and a war, maintained and kept up between God and me? So that I can never eat or drink in peace, or converse in peace, or rise up or lay down in peace; but still I have wrath from heaven upon me? This will infuse gall and gravel into all my enjoyments whatsoever. I am not serving God's design, for the promoting of godliness, in opposition to this growing and descending wickedness in the world; I do nothing towards it. This very reflection is enough to imbitter all my comforts. And what are such and such relations to me, but confederates against God? They agree to sin together, and to carry on an interest against God together. For there can be no neutrality in such cases, as was said before. And then,

11. This is but an ill provision for a day of accounting, which will come, whether we sleep, or whether we wake; whether we forget all such considerations, or whether we consider them. "Judgment lingereth not; and destruction slumbereth not." If I eat on, and drink on, and sleep on, judgment comes on with never a whit the slower foot. O! the seriousness of that interwoven counsel, in the discourse of the apostle, even with reference to this business of the matrimonial state, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as if they had none; and they that weep, as if they wept not: and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as if they possessed not; and those that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

The time is short. That may have reference to families, and the world: families that were spoken of before and after; and the world, in the whole, which is spoken of there in express terms. The fundamental relation in families, it is measured by a short time; by a very short time. Where there hath been such a union lately contracted, it will shortly be broken; time measures it: and that time will have run to its period very speedily. The time is short: it remains therefore, that they that have wives be as if they had none; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not. They rejoice in having newly contracted such a relation: it is reasonable to understand it so, considering it the subject of the apostle's foregoing discourse: that joy will be as if it had not been, in respect of the grounds; and it ought to be so, in the mean time, in respect of the degree. That rejoicing, in having entered into such a relation, will soon be turned into weeping, as having lost it, or it having lost you, which comes all to one. And it is but a short time that measures all this.

And do you think it strange, that that time would be counted short, which measures the time of a family, as it is made up of such and such persons now coexistent; or that measures the relation of two such conjugal relatives? Do you think it strange, that that should be spoken of, and counted a short time, when it is but a short time that measures the whole, and measures the duration of the whole—the fashion of the world passing away? As persons vanish, and families vanish, so is the world vanishing, all will be gone ere long. As the apostle John speaks in the like place, 1 John ii. 1. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Now while it is time, and but a short time, that measures all our affairs, and all our enjoyments, and all our designs, under the sun; time that will be soon done, and which will end in a general dissolution of all this world; a day, a time, "when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; and the earth, and all things therein, be burnt up and destroyed." I say, sure if this is certain to be the last catastrophe and end of all things, of what concernment is it to us, to consider how we may make a comfortable account when time expires, and when it is to be received, and with it, what I have been, and what I have done, in such or such a state and relation, in which I was placed in this world! There ought to be an account made daily: How can I lay down in peace at night, and not be capable of giving some good account that I have been doing somewhat for God, and for the interest of God, and religion, and godliness, in my station that day? But how shall I lie down in the grave, when a life-time is wasted, and spent, and thrown away, and nothing done for God? I have rather served the interest of ungodliness, than religion, all my time in this world; and how shall I think of appearing before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge, when the end of all things cometh; and when I am beset with all the terrors of that day,—the heavens rolling up, and all the powers of them shaken; the earth all on fire, the elements all flaming round about me? And I have a life's time to review and look back upon, spent away in sin and vanity, with no design for God, and for the Redeemer; though I know that he had his design set on foot here in this world, with which I cooperated not, to which I was not subservient—nay, to which I have lived opposite in a stated course.

Let all these things be weighed and put together; and sure we have a great deal to enforce this first instruction; that since corrupt nature is to lie certainly and constantly descending in this world, we would, as we ought, in our several stations and capacities, do our uttermost to counterwork that descending evil.

LECTURE XLI.*

But now I shall carry the matter a little further; and as I have been hitherto showing what those that are, or shortly may be, parents, ought to do themselves, in reference to their next descendants, that is, those that shall more immediately spring from themselves; so, I will show you too, what may and should be done, in order to a further descent, by those that may have the authority to dispose of their children in the conjugal state, with the expectation of a continual descent of human nature by them further and further,—that so, that corruption and pravity which cannot be prevented, to descend with it, may be, as

* Preached December 15th, 1694.

much as is possible, corrected, and redressed in such an after-descent.

This that I am now to speak to, will especially concern such as have children to dispose of in the conjugal relation, who are judged meet for that state. And, indeed, it will equally concern such as are loco-parents, that have the parental trust devolved upon them, by the prudence of others, and their own undertaking.

And as to such, I must still insist, that they are to observe the same measures that have been given in reference to persons who are, themselves, now entering the conjugal state, with the prospect of an offspring, to which human nature, when it descends, will go accompanied with a sinful pravity. And here, indeed, as to the case I am now to speak to, there are on each side two parties ordinarily to concur, or two persons in each party. There are the persons to be disposed of; and there are the persons that dispose of them. And I shall speak to the part of these that are to be the disposers, parents or loco-parents, guardians, trustees, who are to take care of settling such in the world in the conjugal state. In reference whereto, the things designed, in general, usually are, that mankind may be continued upon the face of the earth; and more especially, more particularly, that such and such families therein, or those that they are concerned or intrusted for, may be built and preserved; and (as the Psalmist speaks) "their houses may endure for ever; and their lands (if possible) still called after their own names;" as in that Psalm xlix. 11. And this is a thing that may prudently and justly be dedesigned, in its due subordination. If it be substituted in the room of the true and great design of heaven, or carried on without reference to God, and religion, and the transmissions of a godly seed here, upon earth, then you see the censure of the Holy Ghost, upon this design, in the same context: "This their way is their folly, though their posterity approve their sayings." Sayings are doings here; the sayings of their minds and designs, together with acting conformably and correspondently thereunto. This their way is their folly; yet one age approves the former herein, and they that come after, run the same course.

Here I must, in reference to this, insist, that their measures ought to be with consideration, that, with human nature, a sinful pravity will descend, and that this may be (as much as is possible) repressed; and so, as that God's design may be carried on concurrently, which he had from the beginning, in settling the conjugal state, and in planting families here on earth; that is, that he might seek a godly seed. Wherefore one, when he might have made many, having the residue of the Spirit, but that he might seek a godly seed? Mal. ii. 15. And this design he hath no more quitted, than he hath disclaimed his interest in this whole lower world, or saith, "It ceaseth to be a part of my creation, or I cease to be the Lord and Owner of it." But inasmuch as there lies under our present consideration the duty of such as have children to dispose of, with a prospect that they will have children, and that so a care ought to be extended as far as lies ordinarily within the compass of human endeavour; there ought, indeed, a care extending so far as the desire reacheth, and the main intention of the mind, a great deal further. But so much as I speak to, comes commonly within the compass of actual endeavour. It is ordinary for parents to survive unto the disposal of their children into the conjugal state, with expectation of children from them; and, therefore, it is the duty of such that I am now generally to speak to.

And I will tell you, in general, what it is; to wit, that as much as in them is, to endeavour that religion be transmitted and descend, and go down in their families, and in the families for which they are concerned and intrusted. It is true, it cannot descend the same way as human nature, and the sinful pravity doth; that is, not by propagation; but it is to descend by pious education, as the means that God must be supplicated to co-operate with, and bless, for the implantation of a better principle, than could be propagated by nature. This sinful pravity, it comes by nature; this superadded principle must come by grace. But then, there are means of grace in order to the obtaining of that grace; and this is the first and the readiest means; to wit, a pious education. And therefore, it ought to be the care of such as have children to be disposed of in the conjugal state. To speak a little more particularly,

1. To endeavour, as much as is possible, that they may see them godly before they be married. As much, I say, as is possible to endeavour that. It can be very little satisfaction to the heart of a parent, (if it be so tender as the grace of God in it should make it,) to dispose of a child into such a relation, to a human creature, when, as yet, there is no appearance that it is come into a relation to God. "My child hath now a husband, or hath a wife, gotten for it; but hath not a God, not a Christ. This is a sad thought! I have taken care that it might have what is so unspeakably less necessary; but of that which is most necessary, I have taken no care; that is, to see that my child, my son or daughter, was married to Christ; to see, that before the conjugal covenant, there was the evangelical covenant settled and established between God in Christ, and this poor child of mine." And,

2. Their further care hereon ought to be, finding that there are some good appearances of pious inclinations, they do choose out such for them as will fall in with them, in the design of transmitting piety to their posterity; that I may have one for my son, or my daughter, that I believe, in my conscience, will make it their study and business, to educate their children in the knowledge and fear of God; that religion may run on in the family, and that corrupt nature may not descend alone.

It is a very sad case when this is the very last part of the concern in such a matter as this; when the first thing thought of is, "Where shall I get a great fortune for my son? or how shall I marry my daughter into a great estate?" When this is the first care, is it like that precept of our Lord Christ—"Seek first the kingdom of God?" Matt. vi. 33. This is looked upon as the *unam necessarium*, the one thing necessary; a great fortune, an ample estate, a plentiful income; and as for religion and sobriety, if that be considered, it is considered on the by, collaterally, as if it were but a trifle in comparison. And so, accordingly, are bargains driven on, as formal contracts, as for beasts in Smithfield; even for the very souls of young persons that have not judgment to choose for themselves, and that (it may be) have a great deal of reverence for those that are their guides, and have the disposal of them. They think they must trust their care and judgment, and do so. And they concern themselves only, how they may do well in the world, without considering, at all, what shall become of their souls; or how they may be exposed and given up for a prey; or what shall become of those that shall descend from them.

This is so intolerable an evil under the sun, that we have reason to wonder at the divine patience, that it hath not, by vindictive flames, animadverted on such wickedness long ago. But we are to expect it will. And as it is the wickedness of the world, which that final conflagration must animadvert upon, and will, it can be upon no one thing more than this; this way and means by which wickedness hath been propagated in the world, from age to age, without any care or concern, by those that should have driven on a counter-design, in duty to the great Lord and Maker of this world; as if he had given it up to men only to sin in, and to indulge their sinful lusts in, for a short life's time; and then go down into the dust and die. This is a thing so contrary to the reason of mankind, (if that were attended to, and if men would commune with themselves,) that we cannot but wonder that vengeance hath suffered men to live so long upon the face of this earth, at such a rate; and we have no reason to wonder that such a determination is set, that this world shall end, as we are told it shall, by vindictive flames, consuming the inhabitants of this earth from off it.

But I shall here, first, answer a question which may arise about this matter I have been speaking to, and then proceed to enforce that charge or duty which, I have said, doth belong to such whose case and concern I have been speaking of. The question is this; "Why suppose I that am a parent, or a guardian, do not discern in my child, (son or daughter,) now grown up, and of whom I have some thoughts of disposing into the conjugal state; suppose I do not see in them any thing of a pious inclination, am I to endeavour to settle them, in that relation, with such a one that is judged sincerely pious. And to this I must say,

1. That none ought to be rash and hasty in their judgments concerning others, who are pious, and who are not; at least, there ought to be a very careful abstaining from a positive judgment concerning any, that they are ungodly. What judgment we do pass, it is better, and safer, to err on the most favourable side. But we have a most express rule from our Lord himself not to judge; which is not to be understood, neither, in a simple, but comparative sense. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." We must not judge hastily, not judge rashly, not judge positively, and concludingly, without very clear and full evidence, that such a one is an ungodly man. But we are told afterwards, in the same chapter, Matt. vii. 16. that men are known by their fruits; so that, as we are to be slow and sparing in our judgment concerning others, especially on the severer part, that they are ungodly; so we ought to have, when we do judge, that which may be very clearly evidential: and then (as we do judge that there may be such evidence, as upon which we cannot but conclude so) it is out of question; otherwise, we should not know how to carry it towards such as are put under that mark, according as we are obliged to make distinction; and distinction even between them that have the form of godliness, but appear not to have the power of it; that we may turn away from them. And if there are many other things, mentioned in that context, that are inconsistent with the power of godliness, but do very well agree only with the form, the external form, we are to take our measures from thence, and thereby to endeavour to guide ourselves, as to our carriage and deportment, towards such; "Turn away from them," as the apostle there directeth. And therefore, I say, if matters do evidently appear, such and such do discover, by an habitual stated course and practice, that there is not only no serious godliness, but there is an enmity, a contrariety, an opposition, to it, they cannot comply with rules and ordinary duties that do belong to it; then, upon that, upon that supposition, I say,

2. That they, with whom any such are concerned in such a treaty, will (as they ought to have) have such a design as you ought to have, and therefore will decline you. They will not have such a one for their son, or for their daughter; (if they be such as make conscience of what they do;) and so your question is answered. They will answer for you; "No, I will not have such a one come into my family, or for my son, or daughter, that appears an enemy to godliness, a rebel against Christ; that hath a fixed, habitual aversion to all serious religion. But,

3. If they should not do so, not make that choice, for those whom they are concerned for, which they ought to make, you, for your parts, ought to do as you would be done unto; according to that general rule of our Lord, which carries so much of equity so visibly in the face of it, that even some pagans have been fond of it; and one of the pagan emperors would have had Christ owned for a God, purposely upon that account, for that rule: *Quod tibi non vis fieri, alter ne facias—what you would not that another should do to you, that do not to him.* Carefully observe that rule in this case; "I would be loath my family, being a godly family, to admit an enemy to God and Christ into it; why then should I endeavour to thrust such a one deceitfully, and when the danger appears not to them, as it doth to me, into a godly family?"

It is true, that if such were married to one another, in that case, this were not a thing that immediately concerns that relation, it not lying against the essential *vinculum;* as the apostle hath determined between Christians and avowed infidels: the nuptial bond holds, if it have been entered; but if it be to be made, it ought not to be made; for those that enter into that relation, are to enter it with a design of being "fellow-partakers of the grace of Christ, and helpers of one another heaven-ward;" and such as can comfortably join in prayer, and who are to carry matters so, as that their prayers may not be hindered, and the like. And if I am not to eat with a person visibly ungodly, much less am I to fall into so near a union, and converse with them: that is out of all doubt. And therefore, as I cannot in duty and in prudence, for the good of such as I am concerned for, suffer myself to be imposed upon, in such a case; so I am not to impose upon another. I would be loath to be so imposed upon, to have an enemy to God and godliness brought into my family, or united with my child; and I ought not to obtrude such a mischief as that upon another person, and another family. But when any thing in that kind is done, there must be so much the more serious, subsequent endeavours for redress; there must be the more earnest praying; and so much the more pressing advice given; and so much the more solicitude and care used, that such a one may be plucked out of the snare which, by too much unwariness, they have been betrayed into.

And thus, having answered that question, I will lay before you some considerations that may be given to enforce all this. And pray consider,

1. How little is to be alleged against it, against the carrying on this professed and avowed design, in the disposal of those I am concerned for, whether one's own children, or others that are intrusted to our care; I say, to avow this, as our design, to promote and transmit religion, and the interest of godliness in the world, consider how little is to be said against it. All that can be pretended against it is, that the custom and usage of the world is to look after a suitable match in point of estate, in the first place. It is very true, it is so. And so it is the custom of this world to forget God, and to carry it towards him as if he were not the Lord of this world; and to cast his fear behind men's back; and to trample upon his interest; and to count religion, (which is the main concern of all men,) instead of their interest, their reproach and dishonour. This is the custom of this world. But let such things as these be put in the balance; and so the other considerations, which I intended, will fall in. As this, in the next place,

2. That God doth manifestly insist upon this design still, of propagating religion in the world. You find that he doth provide that such a design should go on through all the successions of time. Our Lord Jesus Christ hath undertaken to be with them that shall be engaged in carrying on this design, to the end of the world. He hath set up an office on purpose; and therefore, the design is not laid aside, nor ever will be laid aside, of transmitting religion in the world. And how dutiful a thing, and how glorious a thing, is it, to offer oneself as an instrument within the compass of one's own sphere, to serve such a design as this!

For let but conscience be appealed to in the case, Do we not find, that God hath a design to keep religion in the world, from age to age? What doth he continue this world for? Is it only that it may continue in rebellion against him, from generation to generation, when it is impossible it should subsist an age, or a moment, without his sustaining influence, when we have so much assurance given us, that it is upon the account of Christ's interest, that this world is kept from dissolution all this while? It is by him that all things do subsist, and consist. Therefore, undoubtedly, God hath this design still. What serves that Gospel for, that we live under, and the ministry and ordinances of it? And when we know that God hath such a design, shall not that which is his design, be our principal design? or shall we presume to disagree with him about our principal end?

Indeed, it is very true, if he had made a declaration from heaven—"I will have no more to do with this world; I will save no more souls in it; I will leave all to follow the inclination of their own hearts, and to walk and live in that darkness which they love, and will have no more concern with them:" if there had been, I say, such a declaration, then all thoughts and care of this kind, that I am speaking of, would have been superseded. For it is impossible for any to act rationally, with despair. Where there is no hope, there can be no design. But when we know that that is none of the case, but God hath a design to continue religion and godliness in this world, from age to age, I am a wretch, if I will not make his design my principal design; or if any thing shall be greater in mine eyes than that. And again, consider,

3. That if I do not do my utmost, within my sphere and capacity, for the serving this design of God, I do certainly make myself a party against him; for if there be a continual descent of human nature, without a prospect of any means to cultivate it, and correct the exorbitancies of it, in its further descent, this continuation of the rebellion against

God; when there is only a provision made, that a rebellious nature may descend, and no more; nothing with it, no corrective with it.

But what a monstrous thing is this! when such care is taken to correct the exorbitancies of nature in inferior kinds; vegetative nature, sensitive nature. Men take care of their gardens, of their flowers, of their trees; and (as the divine poet, Herbert, saith) let weeds choke their sun. How monstrous is this! Into what a wilderness doth uncultivated and uncorrected nature grow! You find it in inferior kinds. If nature be not regulated, rectified, even vegetative nature, it will all be overrun with weeds, and better plants grow wild. The profusions of nature, if no way regulated, they become very ungrateful and uncomely. And when we find how the case is, as to rational nature, what cultivation that needs, that it may be susceptible of the implantation of such a better principle that shall be governing, man becoming, without it, "as a wild ass's colt," as the Scriptures speak; O! who can endure the thought, that so it should be with what descends from me; that what descends, shall have descending with it seeds of enmity, and rebellion, against the Majesty of heaven only, but nothing concomitant towards the cure and the remedy of so horrid an evil.

To have a nature poisoned with enmity, an envenomed nature, even against heaven, running on, if I do not use my utmost care and concern, that as there shall be a continual descent of human nature, so that the correctives may accompany it, and go along with it, I do make myself a party against God and godliness. For I am sure that the uncultivated and impure corrupt nature will be continually carrying on that war, and tumultuating in fresh rebellions against heaven. And so that makes me, by neglect, a party; I betray the interests of God in that matter. And,

4. Let it be considered, too, what horrid cruelty this is towards our own bowels, or such as I have otherwise undertaken the care of, visibly to throw away their souls: to seem not to care what becomes of them; whether they shall have any helps God-ward, or heaven-ward, yea or no. No concern that whatever they shall bring forth, in all probability, and according to visible appearance, is only brought forth for the destroyer; all children of perdition only in view. And it is, in the last place, to be added,

5. That if any such persons would allow themselves to consider, that have such a concern upon them, or who are so intrusted with the disposal of young ones, either their own, or others committed to them, that will finally be found most of all cruel to their own souls. For how shall such, at last, lie down in peace, when they come to make up their accounts with God? "Such and such opportunities I had to serve the God of my life in this world, which I have lost; and I have thrown away such, whose souls I was concerned for, to have taken care of, even as my own." For we are to love our neighbours as ourselves; and much more those that are nearly related. O! the wounds and gall, and the terrors of spirit, wherewith (if the matter be reflected on) such must lie down at last. And the case is worse if it be not reflected on.

But then, there is somewhat to be said, too, to the other sort of persons that are concerned in this same case; and that is, the persons to be disposed of. All that I have said hitherto, refers to the disposers. But for them that are disposed of, it is not fit they should come into such a relation as that, till they can use some thoughts of their own, and so be capable of understanding what their duty is in such a case. And,

1. It is manifestly their duty to be very flexible towards parents and guardians, when they see they have a visible design of their spiritual and eternal welfare, in the first place; and that which they are chiefly concerned for. And,

2. It is their duty to be inflexible, if they find that such as are concerned for them, have a design to throw them away; that they do not care as to what concerns their souls, and their spiritual estate, so as they may marry into an opulent condition in this world. In that case, I say, they ought to be inflexible; but dutifully and submissively, still. They ought to carry it with decorum, and not to be insolent in their refusal of those offers that are made them by parental authority, or in opposition thereunto; but, with modesty and humility, still to dissent, still to disagree; "I will not so venture my soul upon an ungodly person; or where there is no hope I shall have help God-ward, or heaven-ward."

LECTURE XLII.*

Thirdly, It may be of use to us, to let us see how reasonable and righteous it is, that the conceptions and births of human creatures should be ordinarily attended, from age to age, with such dolours as we find they are. It is not to be repined at, that when such conceptions and births are in sin and iniquity, they should be also accompanied with terrors, with such pangs and agonies, as are commonly experienced. For it ought to be considered, what the productions are. What are the productions when a human creature is brought forth into this world? Why, a thing shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin. And abstractly considered, and antecedently to supervening grace, it is a monstrous production. Any such production, it is a monstrous thing. A reasonable, intelligent creature produced into being, with a radical enmity against the infinite and supreme Good, the Fountain of all excellency and perfection. Consider it, I say, antecedently to supervening grace, and every human product is a monstrous one. As reason is yet but radical and seminal, so is corruption, so is malignity against God. "Estranged from the very womb," as that expression is, Psalm lviii. 3.

Therefore, this lot is to be submitted to, with so much the more equal mind, remembering that this was part of the first sentence, when sin did first spring in the world that conception and production should be in sorrow. That such sickness, such pangs, such agonies, should so constantly attend human conception and birth; we are not to repine at it, as if it were an unreasonable, an unrighteous thing; but we are to consider the reason of this and that: God will have a continual memorandum kept on for the putting us in mind, from age to age, what the nature is that is descending and running down in this world, from age to age.

And that this should be the harder lot of that sex upon which it falls, the apostle gives this account—that that was the first deceived sex, first in the transgression, 1 Tim. ii. latter end. And the indulgence that is superadded, ought to be so much the more gratefully acknowledged; to wit, that there is so particular discovery of grace with reference to that sex; "She shall be saved in child-bearing, if she continue in faith, in holiness, in purity, in sobriety," and in love, the immediate product of that faith; a heart united with God, by that "faith which works by love." We read it, "charity," which commonly is understood to carry a reference especially unto a fellow-creature. But there is no reason for that restriction in the native signification of the word itself. If she continue in faith, and love, with holiness and sobriety, she is in a safe state, notwithstanding all the pangs, and dolour, and agonies, which, according to the original unreversed sentence, must be expected to be in the way. But again,

Fourthly, We may further learn, hence, by way of use, with what patience, and meekness, and wisdom; and with what considering minds, parents should observe and bear the sickness and death (when that case comes) of their children in their younger and more tender age. It requires much grace, much wisdom, a very serious and considering mind, to carry it equally and aright, in reference to such cases when they fall out; that a poor child that hath lately peeped into this world, is presently struck with some distemper or another, as soon as it breathes it languishes, and, it may be, dies; which is, you know, a very common case: the far greater part being hardly thought to outlive infancy, who are born into this world. These languishings end in death more commonly, than in recovery and consistency in health. What is the reason of all this?

* Preached December 22d, 1694.

Why humanly, indeed, they are apt to think it very strange, who are short-sighted creatures, and measure all things by the short line of time, and confine all those thoughts and apprehensions of things to this present world. But we are to consider, that when such a creature appears first upon the stage, it appears a creature tainted with sin; so it brings death with it, even from its very birth, into this world. "Death passeth over all men, inasmuch as all have sinned:" and sure, infants must be included in that all: and so they must be understood to be sinful creatures; to wit, that this radical evil hath tainted their natures, as soon as they have the human nature.

This is a case, therefore, about which we are not to contend, but which we ought to set ourselves to improve, and turn to gain. Is such a creature, as soon as it is born, a sinful, impure creature? Why, we must consider, that sin refers to eternity. I pray mind, that every thing of sin against God, it implies a reference to eternity, and to another world. Sin never reacheth its end and term here in this world. They that sin in this world, they are to give an account in the other: and that obey and do comply, and fall in with the terms of the Gospel, (the only prescription and relief in the case of having sinned,) they are to have their reward in another world. Sin, if it lie upon the sinner, turns to a miserable eternity in another world. Sin done away by expiation and by satisfaction, turns to a blessed eternity in another world. Do not think, therefore, that such creatures were finally made for this world. It would be an accountable riddle, that infants should but look into this world, and presently fall sick, and (as commonly it doth) that sickness end in death, if human nature were made for this world only. But this is to be considered, when such a creature comes into being, here is a production never to cease; a thing lately come into being, never to go out of being more: and that this world is only a *vestibulum*, an introduction into another world, which never dissolves, and wherein, whether our state be good or bad, they never change.

It ought hereupon to be considered, further, (that so such a case as this may be improved unto advantage,) it is improved to great advantage, if we consider what such a creature was made for; and considering it as a fallen creature, or sinner, what this sin it hath about it hath reference to. It hath reference to eternity. All sin hath that reference.

But it will be of further improvement, if it be also considered by parents, in such cases, as to what tenderness they usually have towards their children, when they are sick, and with what solicitude and fear they used to be vexing and disquieting their minds, lest they should die; yet they ought to be instructed, hence, to have a tenderness in reference to their spiritual maladies, and a like concern and dread of their dying eternally. Here would be a great improvement. "O! what a tenderness have I for my child when it is sick. Why, this distemper doth but attack the flesh, frail, mortal flesh, that was formed out of the dust so newly; and must, sooner or later, return to it again: but my child hath an immortal spirit in it too; and that is tainted with sin: it hath its worst and most dangerous distemper within. O! what cries, what supplications, should I send up to the Father of spirits, and Father of mercies, that he would cure these spiritual maladies!" And whereas, you are afraid that your child will die; you are to be more afraid lest it should die eternally.

And labour to consider aright, the grounds you have of reasonable hope, in reference to this case. It is a case that parents ought not to consider with despair. Those that are themselves in covenant with God through Christ, the promise is to them, and to their seed: and they have a great deal more reason to hope, than they have to despair. And for ought I see, as great reason to hope concerning their children dying in infancy as they have to hope concerning themselves. The covenant of God in Christ doth not signify nothing. And whereas, that age is incapable of covenanting for itself, if such a one, growing to maturity, do not disclaim, but stand to the covenant of his or her parents, it holds firm and unalterable. And, in the mean time, while there is no capacity of possibility of disclaimer, we have no reason to think there can be any failure on the other part, but, according to the tenor and constitution of God's covenant, the infant, during its infant state, is considered as a branch in the root; and, before it be capable of treating and transacting for itself with God, it is treated for acceptably and successfully by a holy and believing parent. And therefore, such a case, when it falls out unto godly parents to have their children languishing, even in their infancy, many times even unto death, they should consider what an admirable, strange thing it is: "This creature, as it came from me, came into this world an impure thing, a polluted thing, a child of wrath by nature; now, how is it numbered among the children of the Most High, and adjoined to the general assembly, (when it is gone from hence,) to the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect! What a change is this! So impure a creature as it came from me, is become now, all of a sudden, so glorious a creature!"

And it is further to that purpose, to be considered, What did God make such a creature for? Why, what, do you think he made it on purpose to please me? If I be the parent, the pleasure I take in it is but a collateral and secondary thing. But do we yet need to be taught that God made all things for himself? And that it may be good indeed, when such strokes do befall families, children lopt off, one branch after another, (it may be the single one,) to consider whatsoever a providence may specially animadvert upon, and if there be any thing evident in view, it ought to be considered; it ought to be well considered and taken to heart. Yet, it is possible there may be a vulgar error incurred in this matter too: that is, in thinking that the principal design of any such dispensation was, or must be, the affliction and punishment of the holy parent. That ought to be considered, where there is no notorious delinquency to be reflected upon. I say, it ought to be considered as some end, but not as that principal end, of such a dispensation: for as the principal end of God's making such a creature was not to please me; so the principal end of his taking such a creature out of this world, was not to displease me; but to glorify himself: and that end cannot be in this world, for which he hath made such a creature.

And it ought to be considered, that his right in it, is more than mine, infinitely. If any of you should put a child to nurse, and it grows up under the nurse's care, and she is pleased with it, takes complacency in it: and because she doth do so, when you call for your child home, she will not part with it, because it pleaseth her; surely, you would think that your right and interest in the child are superior to hers; and hers (whatever it is) is not to be considered in competition with yours; and yours is far less to be considered in competition with God's; yours is far more inferior. And therefore, there ought to be a grateful resentment, not without sense, not with stupidity; but with serious and apprehensive minds, and having the state of the case lying in view before you as it is. And therefore, I add,

Fifthly, That the miseries of this world ought not to amaze us. We are not to think it a strange thing, that this lower region should be a region of so much wretchedness and carnality, as it is found to be, from age to age: for is not every one that is born into it, born a sinner? And whereas, none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, who can hope to bring a quiet thing out of an unclean? Purity and peace, pollution and disturbance, go together. Every one brings into this world, not only that which is troublesome to himself, but that which is troublesome to others, too, with whom he hath to do. They bring that with them into this world, which must make it an unquiet, stormy region to them. Our greatest troubles (with every one) are born with us. And this is the common case, and cannot be otherwise, when we consider that sin, which every one brings with him into this world, doth dissolve the union between God and the soul, and breaks it off from God. A sinner, as such, is loose from God. And therefore, this would bring, from age to age, in a state of apostacy and separation from God, that which we see to be the consequent thereof, a universal confusion of our very nature within itself, and of all men (as they fall into any kind of conversation with one another) towards one another too. This cannot but be, hereupon, a heap of confusion, a mere chaos.

How can it be otherwise with creatures fallen from God? If man that is born of a woman be an unclean thing, (as Job xiv. 4.) then, (as the 14th chapter begins,) it is not at all strange, that man that is born of a woman should be of few days, and full of trouble. So many such creatures as are produced, and brought forth into being in this world, so many fountains of misery and wretchedness are produced. Think of the vast numbers of the inhabitants of this earth, and every one, even from his very infancy, is a fountain both of impurity and misery. And therefore, it is not strange that so many fountains should deluge this world, from age to age, both with wickedness, so as that it may well be said to lie therein, and (as that which is most connatural thereunto) with misery also.

And it is, hereupon, to be the result of our thoughts, when we consider with ourselves, what a miserable region this world is: this ought, I say, to be the result of our thoughts: it is all natural, it is all most genuine; if we see early discords in families, when a family is planted, young plants springing up in it; if there are quarrellings, janglings, fallings out, perpetual animosities, even among those nearer relatives in families; as the poet observed long ago—*Fratrum concordia rara*, seldom is there any agreement among brethren; those that are branches of the same root. If we look further into larger societies, cities, kingdoms, or nations, they are all continually full of confusion, from age to age; and it is from hence, that the wretchedness of this world, which springs up from as many fountains as there are men and women upon earth, and these fountains, from their very infancy, are "like the troubled sea, whose waters cast forth mire and dirt," as the prophet speaks: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." That wickedness which overflows the world, cannot but make it an unquiet and gloomy region. And therefore, again,

Sixthly, We may further learn, how unreasonable and unaccountable a thing it is, that men should be in love with this present world. It is indeed stupendous to think, that our minds should so cleave to so horrid a thing as this world is; should be set upon it, that they will not run from it; that here we think of taking up our rest! O! think, what we ourselves were, and what the rest of mankind is; "a generation of vipers," poisonous creatures, of an envenomed, malignant nature. If we find that we have a design, any desire, any hope or prospect of a better state, methinks, we should not affect to live among such creatures, and continue ourselves when a cure is to be hoped for; when we understand the design of grace, that it will make such as comply with its methods, pure, and holy, and glorious creatures ere it be long: but not here, but inchoatively and imperfectly only. When I consider this, methinks we should be quite out of love with this world, and say with ourselves, "This cannot be our rest, for it is polluted," as in that Micah ii. 10. O! let us be up and begone as soon as we can have a fair exit; and make it our business while we must stay here, as much as is possible for us, to keep from the corruptions that are in this world, and to get, as much as in us lies, this impure fountain of sin dried up; and to be waiting with earnest and most desirous expectation, for a translation into that place where there shall be no more sin, but perfect purity: nothing to interrupt and hinder the closest union, and sweetest pleasures, and most delightful intercourse, between God and us. "He that hath this hope purifieth himself as God is pure:" the hope of being like God, and seeing him as he is, 1 John iii. 3. referred to the immediately foregoing verse. Which being made like God, and seeing him as he is, we know this present state admits not of.

Seventhly, We may further learn, hence, to admire the divine patience towards this wretched world, that he hath spared it so long, is so indulgent to it; while wickedness is so continually propagating an enmity, rebellion, and war against himself, from one generation to another. We ought to consider the divine patience in this, both as great and as wise. As great; to look upon it abstractly, it is wonderful patience, that God should bear with such a world, that is transmitting continual wickedness and enmity against himself from age to age, when he hath it so perfectly in his power to put a stop and period to all this, at his own pleasure. It is great patience. It is a very great thing.

But we ought also to consider it, too, that it is the patience of a God; and then it must be wise as well as great. Wise with reference to somewhat else, as well as great in itself. It cannot be, but that the reference of this patience must be to somewhat else, to some God-like design; otherwise, would he sustain a sinful world, and let sinners beget sinners, and propagate a rebellion and war against himself, from age to age, if he had not some great meaning in all this? Why, there will be glorious results out of it, which, by how much the less our understandings are capable of comprehending it, with so much the more patience, and resignation, we should wait for it. It will be found at last a thing worthy of God, to have borne, with so much patience, the wickedness of this world so long. But then,

Eighthly, We are from hence to reckon, too, that this state of things must not last always, when this is the constant course and common case that, from age to age, impure creatures are begotten of impure creatures, conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity, we may conclude upon it, that this course will have an end. And we are not to think it strange, if it should have such an end as the Scriptures of truth tell us it will have; that is, that a day will come, "when the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat; and all things therein shall be consumed and burnt up," as it is in that 2 Peter iii. at large. We are not to think this strange or unworthy of God, that he should design such a way, to put a period at last to the generations of men on earth, when they are so continually, so long as they last, handing down and transmitting wickedness and war against heaven, from generation to generation. It is never to be thought, that this can last always. Therefore, how much the more wicked we observe the world to be, with so much the more awe, trembling, and dread we should consider what is coming—that day of the perdition and of the destruction of ungodly men; this world being reserved unto fire against that day. But again,

Ninthly, We are further to learn, how admirable a thing it is, that in the mean time, God should be raising up to himself a divine offspring, out of an impure race of creatures; (Be they as they are, and as they, from age to age, are born in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, yet, saith God, "I will have my part and share among them;") that he should have assigned to a Redeemer his seed, ("He shall see his seed," Isaiah liii. 10.) even out of this corrupt seed, this seed of evil-doers. And whereas, according to the natural state af the case, (as it is stated before,) man in his first apostacy being an accomplice with the devil, this world is entirely become the devil's family: "You are of your father the devil," John viii. 44. So men, morally considered, are. In respect of their naturals, (it is true,) God is the Father of their spirits; but in respect of their morals, lapsed, corrupted man, is the devil's seed, and so, antecedently to grace, this world was become the devil's family: but now, that God should raise up to himself a family out of this family; that there should be a diverse and contrary seed springing up, even amidst the other, and out of it, opposite to the other, and having its particular and distinct character, this is admirable! As the apostle tells us, "Herein the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest." There is a manifest, discernible difference between them. There is no doubt they must needs differ, beyond all that can be thought, who are of so vastly different parents.

But here is the wonder,—that God should design to raise up to himself such a seed, out of such a world, out of such a race! that he did not rather choose to abandon this (one) when he was gone off from him; and when he could, by a word, have raised up another pure, holy, innocent creature throughout. No; but this design was to defeat the device and contrivance of the devil: he thought to have this seed, and all this race of creatures entirely off from God: No, this shall not be; he was resolved he would herein deceive the deceiver; and (as to this design of his) destroy the destroyer;—destroy him that had the power of death, and make a fool of him.

This (as I noted in the opening of the text to you) was a course most eligible to the Supreme Wisdom, not to

make a direct regression of any of his works, by meeting with opposition and a design driven on against him. But he resolves to proceed in the natural course that was laid out at first, and to counterwork that arch-enemy, the first, the grand apostate; and to carry on his own design, against his design; and to turn all to honour and glory at last; even into matter of the highest triumph over the defeated and disappointed destroyer of souls. And this is that which we should consider, with wonder and reverence, that God should have such a design as this in hand, and continually kept on foot, to raise to himself a pure, and holy, and divine seed, (which shall at length be perfectly so,) out of such an apostate degenerate race. And,

Tenthly, This lets us see the necessity of regeneration. Is man such an impure creature, even from his very original, from his conception and birth? Then he must be new made. If any thing shall be made of him to good purpose he must be made over again. This shows us of how absolute necessity it is, that there should be not only in discourse, but in fact, that great mystery of regeneration, belonging to our religion. Is man now, from the beginning, such an impure thing? (the great God beholding this,) there is nothing to be made of this creature, unless he be new made. Is he born such a thing? he must be new born. Born he is, of earthly parentage; but "he must be born from above," as that word admits to be rendered, John iii. 5. But yet,

Eleventhly, It also shows the kindness, as well as the necessity, of this regenerating work; by how much the more necessary, by so much the more kind. How admirable grace is there in it; that when the exigency of the case required that this creature should be made and born over again; I say, when the case required such a thing, God should so graciously vouchsafe it! This is admirable grace! "We were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures;" slaves in our birth; born slaves. "But when the kindness and love of God appeared, not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord," Tit. iii 4, 5. Consider the grace of regeneration, how gracious a work it is, that God, who had no need of such creatures, creatures that could add nothing to him, should condescend to such a thing, to let that holy and pure Spirit of his come, amidst all their impurities, with his own holy light and influence, upon creatures that he might have abhorred to touch with: that the holy and pure Spirit should shed his light and influences, (so pure things amidst so much impurity,) there to regenerate, there to renew, there to form, there to reform—O what grace is this! And, lastly,

Twelfthly, We may further collect, hence, how glorious a work regeneration or renovation must be when that shall take effect. "Behold, I make all things new," Rev. xxi. 5. Who would expect that such a state of things as this should come out of such a state as this world was degenerated into, when every particular creature that inhabits it was a fountain of impurity and misery to itself, and to the rest? That there should be such a thing laid in the divine counsel—"Well, I will new make this world; there shall be such a thing as new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell:" with what wonder and transport should we think of this, that God will have so glorious a world, out of a world so lost and sunk in impurity and death as this world is!

But thus far, we have been considering the state of the apostate children of men—THE FALL OF THE FIRST MAN—THE FALLEN STATE OF MEN, and—THE EQUITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE PROCEDURE IN ALL THIS. It remains, in the next place, to come now to that which I last observed, by way of use, will lead us more directly to consider; and that is, WHAT HATH BEEN DESIGNED, AND WHAT IS DONE AND IS DOING, IN ORDER TO THE RECOVERY OF THIS IMPURE, THIS LOST AND LAPSED CREATURE.

* Preached December 26th, 1694.

LECTURE XLIII.*

Luke ii. 14.

Good will towards men.

[*The whole verse runs thus,—Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men.*]

You know we have been largely, and very lately, discoursing to you of the apostacy, the fall of the first man, and the fallen state of men, with the continual descent of a corrupt nature through all the generations of men hereupon. It now follows, of course, (and according to the natural order of things as they lie,) to speak of man's recovery. And in order thereunto, in the first place, of God's kind propension towards men; which is to be considered as that which leads on the whole of any design or endeavour to that purpose; His good-will, the original, the source, the fountain, the well-head, of the glorious design which he hath set on foot for the recovery of such a lost and lapsed creature. This is more especially held forth to us in the close of this verse now read; and not more distinctly and fully any where else in Scripture. But it is in conjunction (as we shall come more particularly to take notice of by and by) with other things which we shall not overlook, though that which I design to fasten upon, is this particular only—"Good will towards men."

And if, with reference to what we have heard, we do but consider the summary import of these words, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men," it might fill us with amazement and wonder. And sure it would do so, if these things were now altogether new to us, or did now come at this time to our notice and hearing. Upon what hath been so largely discoursed concerning the fall, and the degenerate state of fallen creatures; how sin and death have spread themselves through this world; how an impure and poisoned nature was continually descending, and transmitting, from age to age, a nature envenomed with enmity against the best of beings, the sovereign, rightful Lord of all: and that by this continual descent and transmitting of such a nature, (which, as you have heard it, did not seem meet to the divine wisdom to hinder by preternatural means,) here was, hereupon, a continual war maintained and kept up on earth against heaven; and this war carried on in an open hostility from age to age. Upon the discovery (I say) of all this the true representation (however defective and short of the full) of the state of the case between God and man; if we did not live under the Gospel, or had no notice, no intimation or hint, of any such thing before, as now comes to be laid in open view before our eyes, we should be the most transported creatures that ever God made; the children of men would generally be so. And certainly, upon the supposition already made, two things we would have expected. And two things we would little ever have expected or thought of. We would,

1. Sure, have expected that there should have been an efficacious revelation of wrath from heaven. There hath been a verbal one, and a real one in degree; we would sure have expected it to have been most efficacious and total. We would wonder that it hath not been long ago; that it hath not turned this world into flames and ashes, many a day since; and in that way put a period to the propagation of a wicked nature, and the continuation of a war and hostility against heaven, and the Lord of heaven and earth. And we would have expected,

2. That, whereas men have been accomplices with the devil, in this apostacy from God, and in the continuation of this rebellion and war against him, from age to age; (accomplices with a sort of creatures of a higher order, a great part of the heavenly host that first made a defection from God, and drew in man with them into the same apostacy;) I say, we would sure have expected that none should have been more ready executioners of the just wrath of God upon those disingenuous, apostate, ungrateful generations and race of creatures, than those angels that

retained their integrity, that left not their first estate. We would have expected that they should have been the most prepared, expedite instruments of God's vengeance upon such a generation of creatures as we were, and have been most willing to have come upon that errand, to vindicate their rightful Sovereign Lord from all indignities and dishonours that have been done him, by the creatures of their own order first, who had drawn into a confederation with them a whole race of creatures of an inferior nature and order. One would think that love to God, and a zeal for his honour and interest, should so universally have inspired them, the glorious inhabitants of heaven, that no errand would have been more grateful to them, than to be sent as the quick executioners of the divine revenge upon such a wicked world as this.

And again, upon the forementioned supposition, there are two things that we should as little ever have expected, to wit:

1. That there should ever have been a thought of favour and kindness in heaven, and with the God of heaven, towards such creatures as we. That we would little have looked for, that ever the sound of such a voice should have been heard from heaven towards such an apostate degenerate race of creatures, as "peace on earth, and good-will towards men." Who would ever have looked for it? That when they were breathing nothing but war, and enmity, and hostility, against heaven, there should be a proclamation from thence, of peace towards men on earth, proceeding from (as it could proceed from nothing else but) good will. And again,

2. We would as little have expected, that the angels of God should be the messengers of such tidings to this world, whose dutiful and loyal breasts we must conceive filled with indignation against apostate creatures, that had left, and put themselves off from so kind, so benign, so gracious, and so rightful a Lord. One would little have thought, that they should have come upon such an errand; that when they would rather have been waiting for a commission to execute the just wrath of God upon this wretched world, they should be sent to proclaim *peace*, and to signify the divine good-will towards men. Though, indeed, for the same reason for which they would have been executioners of the divine revenge upon this wretched world, they would also be messengers of such glad tidings; to wit, because they were obsequious, dutiful, and loyal, and had but one will with him, whose creatures and servants they were. His will, so far as it is notified and made known, is always perfectly complied with in heaven, as we are to desire it should be here on earth. But that was the case here; the angels are sent upon this errand first, to bespeak "glory to God in the highest," and to speak out "peace upon earth, and good-will towards men."

And now finding ourselves outdone every way, that what we would most of all have expected, we find not; but what we would never have expected, that we find: that as to the most dismal and dreadful things that we would have looked for, we meet with a grateful disappointment; but as to such things that we would never have looked for, we meet with a most grateful surprise. When we find (I say) the matter to be so, then would our narrow minds begin to fall a wondering at somewhat else; to wit, that since wrath did not break forth upon this world, to put a sudden end and period to it; and that God having so many mighty and powerful agents to employ as instruments therein, prest and ready at his command, they were not yet employed in that work; but, on the contrary, grace breathes from heaven upon this forlorn world, and the angels of God are here made the first of ministers (as it were) thereof, to publish it and make it known; we would, then, wonder why was not this much earlier? Why was it not many ages before? Why did not that gracious, kind design break forth sooner, so as to have mollified the world, to have assuaged and conquered down that enmity, and to have prevented the insolencies of wickedness, which, through a succession of many ages, for almost four thousand years together, had prevailed, and been acted on the stage of this rebellious world.

But we see that in all respects, "God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; but as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts," Isa. lv. 7. What was, with deepest and most profound wisdom, forelaid with him in the eternal counsel of his will, it was to have a gradual, and a very gradual, discovery and revelation to this world; and not to have its fulness of accomplishment till the fulness of time set for it. Every part of that method, which he had laid with himself, every juncture in it being, by divine counsel, affixed to so many parts, and points of time, so as that every thing belonging to that glorious design must fall into that very season which was fore-determined for it, and then receive its punctual accomplishment: according to that of the apostle James, that sage saying of his, Acts xv. 18. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Not only known that they shall be, but known when every thing shall be, in what time, with what dependencies upon other things, with what references unto things that are to follow and ensue; according to that scheme and model which lay in the all-comprehending Divine Mind; the thoughts and purposes of that mind being not hitherto unformed, but only unrevealed; hid in God, (as the expression is Eph. i. 19.) folded up in mystery, and so concealed from ages and generations by-past; in a mystery that was (as it were) inwrapt in rich glory, or in the riches of glory, as Eph. i. 22. This mysterious design, with the method of it, was not to come into view, but in the determinate season; all things being left by the supreme wisdom, in the dependance of one thing upon another, and with a particular reference to such and such seasons, that all things must have in the course and current of time.

Long it was, therefore, that this world was let sleep on in sin and darkness, unapprehensive generally, that there were any such kind thoughts in heaven towards them. Little was that thought of; and, indeed, for the most part, it was as little desired, as expected, that ever God should have given such relief or redress, to the sad, forlorn state of things in the world. It was, I say, as little desired as it was expected or hoped; for, as the most deplorable things in this our calamitous state, such as distance from God, ignorance of him, unacquaintance with him, the presence of the sensible, and the debasement of the intellectual nature. These were not men's more real misery than they were their imagined felicity; things that they were generally very well pleased with: that which was their doom, was their choice. It was in every man's heart to say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; we had rather live alone apart from God." If any scattered beam of divine light shone here and there, it shone amidst the darkness which refused to comprehend it; a malignant darkness, that was naturally bent to exclude and shut it out. So that it might be truly said, The wretchedness of this world was become connatural to it—its very element; and men did enjoy their misery: those viperous lusts, that, as so many serpents, were inwrapped and preying upon the hearts and vitals of men, they were hugged as their only delectable darlings; and all their business, every were, was to make provision for these lusts, and to satisfy, to the utmost, what was insatiable, and could not be satisfied. So that there was not less need of divine power, to apply a remedy in such a case, than there was of wisdom to contrive, or kindness to design it.

And thereupon, as men did all this while generally (as it were) enjoy (as we said) their own misery, enjoy it to themselves; so God did all this while enjoy his own love to himself; pleased himself in this design of his, which yet, for the most part, was concealed and hid in God, as was before noted to you; and he might do so, the whole method of that design, in all the parts and junctures of it, being so surely and firmly laid, and one thing so connected with another, that it was altogether undisappointable; he being Master of the design, having it perfectly in his power, and it being impossible any thing should intervene the accomplishment of whatsoever he had determined, and purposed within himself. He enjoyed his own love, this good will of his towards men, as it was a fountain of that designed good, which they should enjoy, and which, through the several successions of some ages of time, they did, in some measure, enjoy. And that also was an ever springing fountain to himself; for nothing can satisfy God but

God: an everlasting complacency, therefore, he must be supposed to take in his own benignity, in the goodness of his own will, with all the other perfections thereof.

But now, at length, in the fulness of time, this design of his breaks forth unto men too; not till time was come to its fulness, its parturient fulness, and was to be disburthened of that birth, the greatest and most glorious that ever lay in the womb of time, or was possible so to do. When the Son of God was to appear here upon this stage, and to be brought forth into this world, then it was not fit that so glorious a work as that, the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh, should come forth without a previous knowledge. When he was come, it was fit it should be known what he was come for: and so Christ and a Gospel, they do, in this world, commence both together: that is, now doth the Sun of Righteousness arise and shed his beams upon this world. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself was that Sun; the Gospel was the beams of it, the radiations of that Sun.

And this beaming out of the light and grace of the Gospel, it was, at first, in a way as extraordinary as the thing itself was. How extraordinary was the thing, that God should descend, be manifested in human flesh, put on man, take the name of "Emmanuel, God with us:" a God among men, how extraordinary was that thing! And the way of its discovery, it was suitably, it was correspondently, extraordinary, too: that is, by an embassy of angels, this should be first made known to the world. They were not to be the ordinary ambassadors of those glad tidings among men, but they were ambassadors extraordinary. So you find this matter is represented in this context. First, one angel appears to a company of shepherds, and tells them, (as soon as they were recovered out of their sudden affright,) that he was come to publish to them glad tidings of great joy, that should be to all people—and by and by there is a numberless host, a vast chorus, a choir of angels; a multitude of the heavenly host, who all come together upon the same errand, to publish what we have here contained in the Scripture: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men."

So that look upon Christ as the Sun of Righteousness; look upon the Gospel as the beaming forth, the irradiation of that Sun; and you may look upon this text as the epitome, or that which hath in it the contracted beams of all that irradiation: for a sum of the Gospel it is. Look into the particulars of it, and it is made up especially of these parts.

1. The final issue and effect of this great and glorious undertaking of the Son of God, in descending and coming down into this world, putting on human flesh, and being manifested therein. And that is two-fold—supreme and subordinate.

(1.) Supreme: "Glory to God in the highest." That is the thing in which this whole dispensation shall finally result; all shall terminate in the highest glory to God above; to God that inhabits those highest and most glorious regions, that is there enthroned: all shall have a final resultancy into his highest glory, who inhabiteth those highest and most glorious regions of the universe. And then,

(2.) There is the subordinate effect, or final issue, out of which that glory is to result unto God: "Peace on earth." There is a peace-making design yet on foot. It shall not be abortive. It shall have its effect, and take place. God will, upon certain terms, be reconciled unto men. Men shall be brought first or last (many of them, multitudes of them) to comply and fall in with those terms. And so where there was nothing else but war, there shall be peace: the Prince of Peace is now arrived into this world, and it shall not be without effect: his kingdom is a kingdom of peace, a peaceful kingdom. That peace is principally, and, in the first place, to be between the offended God, and his offending creatures here below. Other peace will proportionally, and in due time, ensue.

This is the final issue and effect of this undertaking of our Lord: that is, the ultimate effect—"Glory to God in the highest;" and the subordinate effect—"peace on earth." And that is the first part that we have considerable here of the words made up of these two. And,

2. The principal, the original, the source and fountain of that whole undertaking of our Lord, and of this two-fold effect, which is to result from it: and that is God's good will towards men. From this fountain shall spring forth both peace on earth, and glory to God; the former more immediately, and the latter ultimately: the former being subordinate to the latter, as the supreme and last end of that. And so as to this matter, the same account is here given of the whole Gospel constitution, as we find given in that Ephes. i. 4, 5, 6. "According as he hath chosen us in him, that we might be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children, according to the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, to the praise and the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." So that take the whole scheme of the Gospel revelation together, and it bears this inscription: It is a frame of things finally and ultimately dedicated to God, as all things must be to him, as well as from him. He that is the author is the end of all. He can do nothing but for himself. How or in what sense he doth so, to wit, doth things for his own glory, we shall have occasion to open more distinctly hereafter. But this being now the first thing that we have in view here; and which I design to touch upon as previous to that which comes last in the text, and is the main I intend to insist upon. Something, I say, I shall speak in reference to this—"Glory to God in the highest."

This you see is the final effect and issue of this mighty undertaking of a Redeemer. The Son of God descending and coming down into the world. Why, what shall be effected hereby? What shall be brought about? Why, "Glory to God in the highest." That should not fail to be effected. God would, it is true, have been glorified in the destruction of this world altogether: if it had been all laid in ruin; if it had been turned into one heap, he would have had his glory. He might have continued that as an everlasting trophy of his power and justice; of his justice by his power.

But that was not the way chosen; and he will not lose by it, as to all revenue that it is possible can be added to the divine treasure. Nothing can be really added. Glory can be added, to wit, *reputation*, (as the word signifies,) which, therefore, must be supposed to have its place in the intelligent and apprehensive minds of men. For the word made use of here, comes from a word that signifies esteem, or to judge. There must be some that are capable of judging of what is honourable and glorious; God himself is the Supreme Judge: and, indeed, there is no competent judge besides. As it is altogether impossible that any should be his peer, or capable of making an estimate of what will be fully and adequately answerable to him in point of honour and glory. And as the matter doth relate to him, and as he is to be himself the judge of honour, or what is becoming of God, what will be an honour to himself; so it is here considered,

(1.) Objectively, as the glory that could only be the thing designed by himself, to himself; to wit, the complacency that he takes in himself, which must bear some proportion to the excellency of his nature and being. And that cannot lie in the mere opinion that he hath in the minds of his creatures, (be those minds never so right, and never so comprehensive,) but the satisfaction that he receives to himself, in himself. This is an end worthy of God, and suitable unto God. Nothing can be an adequate satisfaction unto him, but what is in himself. Now there is an objective glory in himself—the glory of all his excellencies, of all his perfections; and this is the object in which he satisfies himself, and takes his own complacency there. There are, indeed, beamings forth of that excellency into the minds of creatures, but this cannot be his end; to wit, to be well thought of, or well spoken of, by his creatures; they are inconsiderable unto him. The whole creation is even as the dust of the balance, or the drop of the bucket; lighter than nothing, and vanity, in comparison with him.

But there is, I say, to be considered, first, an objective glory, the excellency, the becomingness of the order of things, as they lie in God, which only comes under the notion of creatures, as he is pleased to make the discovery; and when he so doth, that shines into their enlightened minds, which was, indeed, before; to wit, the order of things, that harmony, that comely dependance and refer-

ence of one thing to another, as it lies in the counsel of God's wisdom from eternity. Here is that glory which he beholds first in himself, and so he satisfies himself on the rectitude and perfection of all that is in him, and all that immediately proceeds from him, as it doth more immediately proceed. This only can be God's end. Indeed, the creature's end must be the display of his glory, when once it doth shine forth and come under their notice; then they are to reflect it from one to another, and to diffuse it among one another; so that there must be very different notions of the divine glory as it is his end, and as it is the creature's end. And that this matter may be the more distinctly explicated withal, consider two things here; first, the form, and secondly, the matter, of this saying of the angels in this part of it. "Glory to God in the highest," which is the principal part of the effect or end of this undertaking, the Redeemer's descent into this world; it was to produce glory to God in the highest, as it should produce, in due time, peace on earth, a reconciliation between God and man. I say, the former of this speech is to be inquired into. What doth it mean, that it should be here said, "Glory to God in the highest?" And then, the matter of it, and what is signified under it, we shall come more distinctly to inquire into afterwards.

(1.) For the form of this speech, that it may be rightly understood, we must consider from what mouth it comes, or who are the speakers, who they are that utter it: they are a heavenly host; a most numerous heavenly host; a host of angels that descend upon this account, in this juncture of time, (as it were,) upon a visit, upon a kind visit unto our earth, and to pay a dutiful homage unto the Son of God, whose descent they wait upon at his first arrival into this world of ours. The form of expression will very much be collected by considering the speakers. And nothing, indeed, could be more decorous, more becoming, than that they should be first employed upon such an errand as this, who are the speakers and mouth by whom this first summary of the Gospel is communicated amongst men, here in our world. It was fit there should be such messengers employed and sent; to wit, to celebrate his arrival into our world, who was so great a one, and who came upon so great an errand.

Let us but take notice, by the way, (before we come to collect from hence what the form of this saying must import,) why it should be said by such speakers, a multitude, a choir of angels, who were employed to utter it. Why, that was not all their business, to utter this saying here to a company of shepherds; that falls in with it, and that very aptly; but their great business is to wait upon the first arrival of the Son of God into this world, as a due honour to him. Upon which account we are told, (Heb. i. 6.) "That when he brought his first-born into the world, all the angels of God were to worship him," or to pay a homage to him. When he brought this his first-born into the world, this was (as it were) a decree then published in heaven; "Now let all the angels of God worship him." The thing also refers to 1 Tim. iii. 6. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels." Seen! How seen? Not barely looked upon as by a company of gazers, or of idle, unconcerned spectators; but seen, beheld with an adoring eye; every one seeing and adoring at once.

It was a suitable dignity and honour to them; and it was very suitable from them, considering what a state the Son of God was now coming into. A state that was to be "a little lower than the angels," as Heb. ii. 7. quoted from the 8th Psalm, or "lower for a little while." So the word admits to be read. That inasmuch as this humiliation of his was spontaneous and voluntary, he might not lose their homage by it; and undoubtedly they tendered it him. That self-depression was elective, not necessitated; therefore, he was not to lose by it; he descends, goes down into a state a little lower than the angels; therefore, the justice of heaven determined thus concerning him, and the justice of their minds could not but so consent and fall in with it. "You shall pay your homage to the descending Son of God; he shall lose nothing that is due from you (*cœlites*) the inhabitants of heaven, for this self-debasement." Therefore, though this descent of his was to look with a dark side towards this our earth, because here he was to appear in obscurity; the ends of his coming down here among men would never have been composed and brought about, if he had been to shine as an illustrious person, in bright celestial glory, visibly and openly attended with guards of angels; his work would never have been done; he could never, on those terms, have arrived to the cross, which was finally the thing he had in his eye and design. Therefore, I say, this descent of his most look with a dark side here towards us here below. But yet, care was taken that it should look with a bright side in heaven above, that the glorious inhabitants there might be kept in a dutiful, adhering posture towards him, as understanding their own subserviency and subjection to him; and that he was their Lord still, though he did voluntarily go down into a state a little lower than theirs; lower for a little while. Therefore, upon occasion, their subserviency to him is plainly signified, when he was at the lowest, in his last agonies, angels came and ministered unto him. And so his descent looks with a bright side towards heaven, and those vaster numbers of intelligent minds, that do inhabit those regions; all was lightsome thitherwards, and must be, though it was necessary it should look with a dark kind of gloominess and obscurity towards men on earth, that the design might be accomplished, and not frustrated, for which he did descend and come down into this world.

And so much being premised, it is now obvious to collect what the form is of this same diction, this same saying, by these excellent, dutiful creatures. It must carry with it,

[1.] The form of an acclamation, giving glory to God; proclaiming the divine glory, upon this wonderful product of his wisdom and love, that began now to appear, and obtain, and take place in this world. It was an acknowledgment that he was worthy to receive all honour, and glory, upon this account. And,

[2.] It must bear, too, the form of an appreciation, that is, wishing he might continually do so; that all glory and honour might be continually given to God in the highest. And,

[3.] It might carry in it, too, the form of a narration, there being no verb in the sentence; and therefore, is to be understood as much as if it had been said, "Glory is to God in the highest;" that is, it is a representation how well the glorious inhabitants of the upper world were at that time employed, to wit, in celebrating the divine glory, and giving glory to him. This is the business of heaven: and upon this account, that the Son of God is now descended and come down upon this earth, it is their business on earth to be all giving glory to God in the highest. Or,

[4.] It may be also an invitation to angels above, and men below, so to do. All the glorious inhabitants of heaven, who behold and see; and so, likewise, all the men, and wretched and miserable inhabitants of this earth, who are concerned in all that is now done, join in this, giving glory to God in the highest. And,

[5.] It may be a demand or claim of glory to God in the highest; not only a mere invitation, but a challenge: "Let God have his due glory; withhold not his glory from him. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord," Psal. cl. last. Let the universe praise him, upon account of this marvellous undertaking, that his own Son is come down in glory, veiled and obscured into this world. And it may, in the last place,

[6.] Carry with it the form of a prediction; Glory shall be to God in the highest. As heaven is now full of this thing, earth shall be full of it; God will have his glory, even to the full, out of this wonderful thing, a thing infinitely more wonderful than the creation of this world was; even the extraction of such a universe out of nothing: that God should come down, and be manifest in such flesh as the children of men do wear, and carry about them here upon earth. We do all predict glory to God in the highest hereupon. So great a thing can never be, but there must be a production of glory to God in the highest, some time or another, as far proportionable hereunto, as the capacity of such creatures can admit. He will not lose his glory. We foretell he shall have his glory, even from all the ends of the earth, directed to him in the highest, ansing and springing up from this very thing. But then,

(2.) The matter expressed and signified under this various form, that will also require some further explication too, which now I shall not enter into: but, in the mean time, let us consider,

[*Use.*] Doth heaven appear to have been so full of this thing, the descent of the Son of God into this world, when we were the persons concerned? What amazing stupidity is it, that our souls should not be more taken up about it! It was, indeed, partly duty to God, and to the Son of God, that these blessed angels should be in such a transport upon this occasion; but it was also benignity and kindness, and wonderful kindness towards us. When they saw what was designed to us, they give glory to God in the highest, upon the prospect they had of peace springing up towards us on earth, and of the view they had by retrospection upon the divine good will: finding now that anciently, and heretofore, his delights must have been with the children of men; (as miserable as their state and condition was;) not upon the account of what they now were, but upon the account of what he would one day make them. He would yet one day make them a delectable sort of creatures. The angels of God are full of this; and heaven was full of it. And we are not to think it was only so seventeen hundred years ago; that the thoughts and apprehensions of the glorious inhabitants of heaven are lower about these matters now: no; there is the same occasion, and the same sense. They are in the same joyous and dutiful raptures, upon account of what was doing and designing here upon earth, for producing of peace to men, and glory to himself.

What an amazing stupidity is it, that all this should signify so little with us! That when we are the persons chiefly concerned; when hell may be designing upon us from beneath, heaven is designing upon us from above; yet we are in a deep sleep all this while, neither feel the drawings of hell downward, nor the drawings of heaven upward. Hell is working upon us, and heaven is working upon us, and we seem insensible of the designs of either; the destructive designs of the one, or the kind designs of the other: but vanity fills our minds, and we wear out a few days here upon this earth, without considering what we are here for, or what the Son of God did one day come hither for! What awakenings do we need! And before God shall have his glory, and the earth its peace, what wonderful changes are there yet to be wrought in the minds and spirits of men! And surely if God have any kindness for us, there will be great change wrought upon us.

LECTURE XLIV.*

BUT now to go on to the second thing, the material import of these words; that is, that whereas, by universal consent, the glory of God is the end of all things, it must be very differently understood as it is his end, and as it is the creature's end. It cannot be understood in reference to both the same way.

In reference to the creature, it ought to be their design (to wit, the design of all reasonable creatures) to glorify God, by owning and by diffusing his glory to the uttermost. Their glorifying God consists in these two things; the first whereof is fundamental to the second, the agnition of his glory, and the manifestation of his glory. The acknowledgment of it in their own minds and souls, owning him to be the most glorious one. They add no glory to him; it is not possible they can; but they only acknowledge and take notice of, and adore, that which is; confess him to be what he is, and what he should be. And the manifestation of his glory; the spreading and propagating of it, as much as is possible, from one to another, through the world, even to their uttermost, at least, in the wish and desire of their own hearts. "Be thou exalted above the heavens, and thy glory over all the earth," as it is again and again found in Psal. lvii. and in multitudes of like passages of Scripture. "So is our light to shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven," Matt. v. 16. That his glory may be transmitted by some to others, and by them to others, and so spread to our uttermost universally unto all.

But the matter is quite otherwise to be understood, when we speak of God's glory, as his own end. And it is very needful that we should state this matter to ourselves aright, lest we otherwise take up thoughts very unsuitable, and very dishonourable, and very injurious, to the great and blessed God. That design which hath been already mentioned, upon our first acknowledgment in our own minds and hearts, the excellent glory of the Divine Being, then to diffuse and spread it, is a most worthy and becoming end for creatures, nothing more. It ought to be their very terminative end; the end of ends with them; to wit, the end that must terminate all that they do. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God," is that great practical maxim, 1 Cor. x. 31. Whatsoever we do, must be done, must be all consecrated unto this end, have a stamp of holiness put upon it, by a dedication "to the glory of God." That is (as it were) to be the inscription upon every design, and upon every action, in pursuance of any of our designs. What can be expressed with larger and fuller universality. Whatsoever ye do (eating and drinking not excepted) is to have and be levelled at this end, the glory of God, as being most suitable to the creature. But this is no end worthy of God, the matter being understood and taken so. Indeed, it is suitable enough for any one to design the praise of another; but it is not suitable to any one to design his own praise as his end. It would be thought unworthy of a wise and good man, to do such and such good actions for this as his principal end, that he may be well thought of, and may be well spoken of by others. But the goodness, and suitableness, and agreeableness, of good actions in themselves to his own spirit, is his great inducement to any one that doth partake of the image of God, and that is so far become God-like.

But when we speak of God's having his own glory for his end, (whereas his glory as it is our end, doth but signify our agnition of it, or our manifestation of it, which is not his essential glory,) it is God's essential glory that must be his end; for he can have no end but himself. He is his own first and last; his own Alpha and Omega; and so his glory is, then, his essential glory, which is the lustre of all the excellencies of his being, shining to his own eye, which is his end. For only wisdom can be a competent judge of infinite excellency. And glory doth import and carry in the notion of it a reference to a judicative principle, as the word from whence *esteem* doth come, plainly enough imports. He only is capable of judging what is worthy of himself; and so it is the rectitude of his own designs, as they lie in his own eternal mind, that lies before him under the notion of his end.

But it must be understood, too, that this is not his end neither, to be pursued by a desiderative will, but only by a fruitive; not by a desiderative will, as if there were any thing wanting to him: with us, indeed, all our end is always looked upon by us, as a thing to be attained; and that is suitable to the state of a creature, to act for an end to be obtained, and which we are yet short of. But all things are always present to him, to his all-comprehending mind, and especially that which belongs only to his own being, to which there can be no addition. He doth will himself; not with a desiderative will, but with a fruitive, a complacential will; and so doth act within himself, not from indigency, (as creatures do,) but from a superabundant, all-sufficient self-sufficient fulness: He enjoys himself in himself.

And this is obvious enough to every one that will use his understanding to consider, as well as it is a philosophical maxim, in which all sorts of considering and studious men have agreed. And, I say, it is apprehensible enough to others when it is considered, that one's end and one's good are convertible terms, and signify the same thing. *Finis et bonus, convertuntur*, philosophers use to say; to wit, that which is any one's ultimate end, which is so *de jure*, is his highest and chiefest good. Now nothing is plainer than that there is no good adequate to God, but himself; so that he cannot have his ultimate, final complacency in

* Preached January 12th, 1695.

any thing besides himself. And his glory, his essential glory; the lustre of all the excellencies of his being, is his end; not that which he covets and proposes as distant and unattained; but which he enjoyeth, and acquiesceth in, and which he cannot but have always in his own possession, as he cannot but be in the entire, uninterrupted, everlasting possession of the excellencies of his own being.

And it ought seriously to be considered, that so we may not in our own thoughts debase the eternal, most excellent, and most blessed Being, by supposing that he proposeth it to himself as his end, to aim at that which would be thought unworthy of a wise and good man to aim at; that is, only to be well thought of, and applauded. This is a thing that is consequent, and which ought to be, and which we ought to propose to ourselves as our end. But it is too low and mean an end for God. We may design that for another man, to wit, his praise, which no other man, who is wise and good, will design for himself; but take pleasure in the rectitude of his design, and that goodness of his own actions; and enjoy them, as every good man doth, in bearing the image of God upon him. And therefore, this is a God-like thing; and so must be in the highest perfection in the ever-blessed God himself, and in the excellency of his own being, and in the correspondent rectitude of all his own designs. But this is that which must consequently, and secondarily, come under the common notice of his intelligent and apprehensive creatures, whereupon it is their business, and indispensable duty, to own, and adore, and honour him, for the good that is in him; to wit, to think well and honourably of him, and speak well and honourably of him, upon this account, even as goodness in men, and amongst men, is a thing that claims and challenges acknowledgment and praises from them within whose notice it comes. And then,

2. That being the primary thing here spoken of, which is to result out of this great design, "Glory to God in the highest," all capable and apprehensive creatures being obliged, to their uttermost, to celebrate and glorify him, upon the account of what he was now doing in reference to this wretched world; that being, I say, the first result of this undertaking, upon which our Lord Jesus Christ was now descending and coming down into this world, the second is—"Peace on earth." And that former was to spring out of this latter, as the whole economy of grace in that mentioned 4th chapter to the Ephesians, a design for the glory of God's grace; to wit, it is to be designed by all the subjects, and all the observers thereof.

And now concerning this peace on earth, I shall speak but very briefly to it, in my way to the third thing which I most principally intended, in my pitching upon this scripture; to wit, the original and fountain of all the good will after mentioned. This peace upon earth must be understood to design, first, somewhat more primarily; and then, secondly, somewhat more secondarily, and dependent upon the former.

The primary intendment of it must be peace between God and man, the inhabitants of this earth, its principal and more noble inhabitants, in relation to the state of war and hostility that was between him and them, they having revolted from him, agreed and combined in a rebellion against him; not only with one another, but with the other apostate creatures, who had made a defection before, the angels that fell, and so drew man in as their accomplices in that horrid revolt. And this must be observed as spoken too with discrimination, as we shall have hereafter occasion to note to you; "Peace on earth"—not with hell; there is no proclamation of peace reaching that place. Those kind, benign creatures, this glorious host of angels, this celestial chorus, though it is like enough it might have been suitable to their inclinations (if that had been the design and counsel of Heaven) to have carried tidings, and a message of peace, to their fellow-creatures, of their own order and rank, in the creation of God; yet while it appears this had no place in the divine counsel, and they being so perfectly resigned creatures, and having the same will (objectively considered) with the divine, that is, not willing a different sort of objects from what he willed; they joyfully come on this errand to men on earth.

The will of God is perfectly complied with in heaven; that will which our desires, while we are here on earth, are to be guided by; in our measure we are to desire God's will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. It is perfectly complied with in heaven: they cannot have a dissentient will from their Maker; and, therefore, must be understood to have been contentedly employed upon this errand, to proclaim peace, peace to the inhabitants of this earth, when they had none to proclaim for the inhabitants of that other horrid region; knowing that they, who were their brethren, and of their own order, in the creation of God, were bound up in the chains of everlasting darkness, without remedy or mercy, and reserved unto the judgment of the great day, they willingly come upon this errand, to proclaim peace to the inhabitants of this earth, and are made use of as heralds in this proclamation.

And as this peace must principally be between God and man, so it must be understood to be mutual in the intendment of it between both, that God should be reconciled to them, and that they should be reconciled unto God. And, indeed, there can be no such thing as peace between God and man upon other terms: for if he were willing upon other terms to be reconciled to man, it would be altogether insignificant, and to no purpose. He would be reconciled to an unreconciled irreconcilable man, whose heart should still remain filled with enmity, poisoned with malignity and venom against God. It would be to no purpose to him, for man would be no nearer felicity; and it is impossible for me to be happy in what I hate; and it is also impossible for the children of men to be happy in any thing but God.

Now supposing this peace to be mutual between God and man; to wit, he is reconciled to them, and they are reconciled to him, the prosecution of his justice doth cease, and their enmity towards him ceaseth; there is no longer a contest kept up between his justice and their injustice; then this mutual peace must carry in it two things, agreeable to what is carried in the notion of peace between one nation, or sort of people, and another that have been mutually at war with one another; that is, there is somewhat privative, and somewhat positive, carried in such cases in the notion of peace;—1st, a cessation of hostility, and 2ndly freedom of commerce.

1. A cessation of hostility. They no longer war with one another; God doth no longer pursue them with revenge, with hostile acts in that kind; that is, if once a peace be brought about, whenever this peace obtains, and hath its effect, he doth no longer follow them with acts of vengeance. And they do no longer rise up against him in acts of hatred and aversion; they no longer say to him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" they are no longer fighting against the righteousness and equity of his holy precepts, as the carnal mind is "enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be." All this ceaseth; that is, it cannot be now in any prevalency, in a prevailing degree. And thereupon,

2. That which is positive doth ensue. As it was between nation and nation, which were at war, there is not only a cessation of hostilities, but there is a setting on foot a commerce, an amicable commerce, a free commerce; so it is between God and man now: there is not only no war, but there is a communion, there is a friendly intercourse: God freely flows in upon them in acts of grace, kindness, and goodness. His Spirit was under a restraint before, (according to the doom and judgment past—"My Spirit shall no longer strive,") is now at liberty, set at liberty, from under these restraints. It now freely breathes upon those souls, emits its light, lets it shine in upon them, pours in the influence of the Sun of Righteousness, the vital, sanative influences of that Sun, who is said to "arise with healing in his wings," or beams. These vital, healing beams are, by the Spirit of Christ, freely transmitted, let into the very hearts and souls of such creatures, as were at utmost distance from God before.

Alas! there was nothing to do between God and them, in a way of kindness or friendliness: his Spirit was a stranger to them; no beams of holy light ever shone upon them; no influence of grace; they went with barren and desolate souls, wrapt up in darkness and death: but now the way is open and free; there is no law against it, no

bar, but the communications of the Holy Ghost may be without obstruction. And, thereupon, their spirits are set at liberty towards God, and his Spirit is at liberty towards them and not withheld. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. Their soul was under restraint and clouds before, a prisoner under the divine wrath and justice. They could no act, could not move, could not stir, God-ward; not so much as breathe, nor direct a breath towards God; no holy desires, no holy motions. But now, when commerce is restored, as the Divine Spirit freely breathes on them, it enables them freely to breathe after God, to send forth desires, and take up their highest delight in him, so as to enable them to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, or whom can I desire on earth in comparison of thee?" Psal. lxxiii. 25. This is the primary intendment of this peace, proclaimed by this glorious host of angels: this is the thing primarily intended to be brought about, and which shall have its effect, more or less, and more largely, before the world ends. But then, there is.

2. That which is consequential thereunto, to be considered, and that is—peace upon earth, among the inhabitants of it towards one another. This is not the primary design, but it is the secondary, consequential aim and effect of the great Peace-maker's undertaking, whereof there was a precedent and a leading case in the reconciliation that was first to be brought about between Jew and gentile. "He is our peace, having made both one," Eph. ii. 13. so as that the highest enmities and animosities that ever were between one sort of people and another, were to be taken up between these Jews and gentiles. How contumeliously were the Jews wont to speak of the gentiles; and how ignominiously did they again speak of them. And the fraction was yet more fierce between the Jews and the Samaritans, that were all Israelites, all of one house; insomuch that common courtesies could not pass between them, as appears by that in the 4th chapter of John. "How dost thou," (saith the Samaritan woman to Christ,) "being a Jew, ask water of me, that am a Samaritan? How strange is it! how can you expect that I, being a Samaritan, should give drink to you that are a Jew?" And so great was the distance between the Jews and other nations, that pagan writers have taken much notice of it. *Non monstrare vias* (saith a pagan poet) *eadem insi sacra volenti; that a few would not so much as show the way to one that was not of their own religion;* no, not that common courtesy to tell a traveller his way. Why, he is our peace, he that brings it about, that shall finally, sooner or later, bring about a universal peace, not only between Jew and gentile, (which was a precedent, a ruling case,) but among the several nations of the earth,

"He is our peace when the Assyrian is in our land," and it is to be a universal thing foretold and prophesied; to wit, that "swords are to be beaten into plow-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks, and that men should learn war no more," when once the peaceful tendency of the kingdom of the Messiah doth reach its final and full effect; when it hath effect according to its tendency, so that, at the same time that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the seas, then is there to be that universal peace on earth too, among men towards one another; not only no more hurting or destroying in all the mountain of his holiness, but nation shall not lift up sword or hand against nation, and men shall be untaught that fierceness of nature, which a continued enmity against God had inferred on them: for when the union was once broken between God and man, it must appear, they must be made to understand and know to their cost, that that was central. And that union being dissolved, all union was dissolved besides, that they can never be at peace one with another, when they have broken with God, and the breach remains between him and them. According to what was emblematically held forth in reference to God, and the people of Israel and Judah; that is, by the two staves of Beauty and of Bands; the staff of Beauty signifying the union between him and them; and the staff of Bands the union between them with one another. But when one of these staves is broken, the other is shivered and shaken all to pieces.

Why, this is the import of what is here proclaimed, the final and ultimate import of it—"Glory to God in the highest," and then, "peace on earth." This is the double effect of this great undertaking, upon which our Lord did now descend and come down into this world. But here comes next to be considered,

The principle, the well-spring, the eternal well-spring of this glorious and kind design; a design so glorious to God, and so kind to man, what is the fountain and well-spring of all? Nothing else but his own good will. And this is the thing I mainly intended to insist upon from this Scripture. That having so largely discoursed to you of the apostacy, the fall of the first man, and then of the fallen state of man; and of the way wherein man hath been continued in this fallen state, from age to age, and from generation to generation; I might afterwards come to speak of his designed restitution and recovery. And being so to do, (as the order of discourse should lead,) I shall tell you briefly what the scheme of our discourse now must be; to wit,

I. To speak of the original and fountain of this designed restitution of such fallen and lasped creatures. And,

II. Of the constitution of a Redeemer and a Mediator in order hereunto. And,

III. To show what sort of person this Redeemer or Mediator must be; to wit, to treat of his person, of his nature, of his offices, and of his performances. And then,

IV. To lay before you the doctrine of the covenant of God in Christ. And,

V. The office and operations of the Holy Ghost in the dispensation, and pursuantly to the design of the covenant. And then,

VI. The effects wrought in all that shall actually appertain and belong to God, and be brought home to him, in and by Christ, this Great Head of the *reducees*, of returning souls. And then,

VII. The way and course of such as shall be thus savingly wrought upon, that holy work in which they are thereupon to be engaged, and wherein they are to persist, till they reach the end of that way. And then, lastly,

VIII. The end of all things, with the several things that shall be coincident thereunto.

The first thing in the course and order of discourse comes naturally to be insisted upon, (when we are to consider this business of the restitution of man,) is the original of such a design. Whence sprung it? What is the fountain, the well-head and spring of this great design? Why, good will towards men. This is the summary account that the matter admits of. It can be from nothing else but mere good will towards men. And in speaking to this, I have a two-fold subject of discourse: to wit, first, God's general good will; and, 2ndly, his special good will. His good will wherein it doth appear and is expressed towards men generally and indefinitely considered; and his good will in its more peculiar expressions, and exertions of itself towards a select sort of men. And so two things to be evinced.

1. That God's good will, it hath some reference unto all. But,

2. That it hath not equal reference to all alike. There will be that two-fold subject of discourse distinctly to be pursued. And the former of these I chiefly intend from this scripture; the latter I intend from another more suitable scripture,

But, in the mean time, pray well inlay this in your own minds, that there are two such distinct sorts of divine good will, or benignity, respecting men generally, and respecting some men especially; and that these two are by no means in the world opposed to one another. The doing of which, as it is a most unreasonable thing in itself, so it is a thing of the worst consequences that can be supposed; that is, it tends to confound the whole Christian economy, to break the frame of Christianity, and make it an unintelligible scheme, as incoherent with itself; and this without any pretence, or shadow of a pretence. For these two things—general good will, and special good will; or as the generality of divines are wont to distinguish, common and special grace; these two, I say, are as distinguishable things, and as capable of being distinctly

apprehended, as the general and special natures of any thing else that we can think of.

Now nothing could be more absurd to pretend, that because I have the notion of such and such a general nature, therefore, I must not admit the notion of a special nature, that is narrower than that; and superadds distinguishing to the former. As if when a person hath understood that God hath made such a sort of creatures as we are wont to call animals, living creatures, (that being the notion of a living creature at large,) that therefore, I should pretend there should be a difficulty of understanding the nature of man, one particular under that general; because I have the notion of a living creature taken at large, to wit, a creature that useth sense, that can see, and hear, and exerciseth spontaneous motion, can move this way and that, this, therefore, should be an hinderance to me in conceiving the special nature of man, a nobler sort of creature, that can do all this and something else; to wit, can reason and understand, and lay designs and pursue them, and is a subject susceptible of religion too, as well as ratiocination; would any man of ordinary understanding pretend an inconsistency between these two; or that I cannot fitly conceive the one sort of nature, because I do conceive the other? Because I do conceive the general notion of a living creature, an animal taken at large, therefore, I can the less conceive or take in the special notion of a particular sort of living creatures, that can do more than an ordinary living creature, taken at large.

And the difficulty is not greater if we carry the matter higher or further, and consider that man, as man, having the natural image of God upon him, as such, may be conceived accordingly. And so that object, God's natural image remaining in him, terminates a general divine benignity. And consider, also, the same sort of creatures having likewise somewhat beyond and superadded to the mere natural image of God, to wit, his holy image; this is the effect, (wherever it is, as the case of man is now become,) and can be the effect of nothing else, but special grace: but this I only lay before you by the way to that which we are to insist upon particularly.

LECTURE XLV.*

Luke ii. 14.

Good will towards men.

The former branches of this verse, wherein these angels proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace," have been opened, and something hath been said about this good will towards men, both as it is general and special.

Now as to this general good will of God to men, I shall,

1. Labour to evince it to you in an absolute consideration. And then, shall,

2. Speak in comparison of the way of his dealing with another sort of offending creatures, of a higher and nobler order than men. Now,

1. To evince this general good will to men, according to the absolute consideration that is to be had of it, I shall make use of two sorts of mediums or arguments to that purpose.

(1.) Of such as are antecedent to a more express Gospel revelation; and which will therefore respect them that have not the Gospel, or that never had it. And,

(2.) Such as may be taken from the Gospel itself, of which you have a summary, an epitome, in this same angelical proclamation from heaven; it seeming suitable to the majesty of God, to make his angels, though not the ordinary ambassadors, yet the extraordinary ones, of this gracious declaration of his mind and counsel towards men.

But as to both these sorts of arguments, I have this to advertise you, that the main thing I shall propose to myself in alleging them, will not be so much the evincing of the truth in this matter: for that is clear in itself, shines in its own light; and indeed as to this part of God's general good will to men, or that which is usually called common grace, I can have no adversary, we have none to oppose us in this thing, except atheists. It is true indeed, as to the other part, (his special grace,) there we have very subtle adversaries; and when we come to that part, I do hope, through God's assistance, we shall be enabled to maintain the truth against them. But here my more principal design is, to let you see, by the arguments I shall allege, (which will clear the truth too,) the mighty importance of what we are now asserting, and to what purpose it is that we ought to assert this general good will of God to men. Indeed, that we shall have occasion more distinctly to show, when we come to the use. But I shall hint some of the more eminent purposes now, that it may the more engage the attention of all our minds unto what is to be insisted on to this purpose.

It will be of most direct use to convince, and (if it will seem good to God so far as to bless his word) to mollify the hearts of hardened sinners that have yet nothing of special grace appearing to them, or in them, so as to make way for that, it being God's course to work methodically; and to make things, which have an aptitude thereto, subservient unto other things, that are to be consequent thereupon. It would certainly induce any, that would use their thoughts, to look upon it as a black and horrid thing to be, in the course of my life, with an obstinate, obdurate heart fighting continually against goodness itself, and against kindness and good will.

And it is of mighty importance, too, for the relieving of awakened and doubting souls, that may be hurried with terrors and temptations about their state God-wards; and who, though (it may be) special grace hath taken place in them, yet think it hath not; so as to let them see what relief is yet in their case, (as black as it looks to be,) while they are under the dispensation of more general and common grace, as hath a leadingness and tendency in it unto special.

And there is that too, which will be of general import to all of us, every day, to wit, that we may be brought more to value, and to savour, and relish those mercies which commonly go into the account, and under the *census* of common mercies, of which (God knows) we have too little sense. It is a most unaccountable absurdity, (that I have often reflected on in my own thoughts,) that very generally mercies should be thought less valuable, for that very reason for which they are the more valuable. And so it is commonly in reference to those that are called common mercies: they are less valued for the self-same reason for which they should be more valued; that is, because they come in an ordinary and in a constant course. As health, because it is constant, or is more ordinary, with the most, it may be, it is for that very reason less valued: but every body that considers, knows, that for that very reason it is the more valuable. It is better sure to have continual health, than health intermitted. So the use of our senses, our sight, (for instance,) the noblest of all the rest, because it is a common mercy, therefore it is cheap, and of less account with the most. How great a thing would it be thought, if a man should see but one hour in the day! How would the return of that hour be longed for! Or if but one day in the year; O when will that day come! We need to have the value enhanced more with us of such things as are indications of God's good will towards men in general, that they may have their due weight with us, and that grateful savour and relish in our spirits which they challenge. And let us, therefore,

1. Upon such considerations go on to take notice of those arguments of the first rank, those which lie without the compass of the Gospel revelation, that were antecedent to that more explicit revelation of it, and do fill a larger sphere and region than that whither the Gospel light diffuses and extends itself: for though it be true that the text hath a special reference to that glorious revelation which was now to commence, we are not to think that this good will was then first to commence, as if God did then begin more distinctly and explicitly to own it, and speak it out; but there were *not* obscure indications of it before

* Preached January 19th, 1695.

and which did commonly obtain all the world over, even there where Gospel light obtained not.

I shall therefore, in speaking to that head of arguments, show what it is that men might collect (if they would use their thoughts and understandings aright) from such appearances of divine favour towards them. And because that the reasonings of men may be looked upon as having an uncertainty in them, a sort of lubricity, and that we cannot with so much clearness conclude from mere arguings that are to be fetched from principles that lie without the compass of Scripture; lest any one should think them infirm upon that account, I shall show you, as we go along, how Scripture doth strengthen the same sort of arguments; and how we are directed and prompted even by Scripture itself, to make use of them to the same purposes. And that which I shall insist on, is,

1. The very nature of God, whereof all men that have the use of their understandings, have or are capable of having some notion or other. For he hath stamped more or less of his nature upon the very nature of man, upon the human nature that carries in it a signature of God. There is somewhat that may be known of God in men generally. But there is no notion of God that is more obvious unto any that do apprehend the existence of a Deity at large, than that he is the best of beings, the first seat of all goodness, kindness, and benignity. And this revelation of God, though it be natural, it is from himself, who is the author of all nature, and of this very nature in special; the immediate author, the author so as to be the exemplar of it to the human nature; that is a God-like nature in its first origination. And we are confirmed in it, that is not a false conception of God which we find to have obtained generally in the pagan world, *Optimus Maximus*, that hath been the common heathen language concerning him. But this is an impression from himself upon the mind of man, by which he is taught and instructed, even by nature itself, so to conceive of him.

And he speaks agreeably hereunto of himself, when he tells us his name. There is this sculpture, this signature of his name upon the minds of men every where, till men have studiously and industriously abolished and razed it out, which yet totally they cannot do neither; not so, but that the remainders of such a notion as this, cleaving to their minds, do fill their souls with so much the more horror by intervals, that they have been lately engaged in a course of wickedness, and in an hostility even against the best of beings, against Goodness itself. Those pangs which such do find at such times in their own spirits from a secret and remaining suspicion, that when they have done all they can to think God out of being, they have been but rolling a returning stone; they have been but labouring for the wind; they can effect nothing when the thoughts return upon them, when in spite of them they must be yet constrained to conceive with a certain *formido*, that God is, though it may have been the wish of their hearts, O that he were not! then the main engine of their torture must be the apprehended goodness of God. For,

Do but consider if indeed he is, (whom we would fain think into nothing if it were possible,) then it cannot be but he must excel in goodness; the first thing conceptible in his nature, must be goodness. Mere philosophy hath taught men so to think of God, to think of the God, as a notion antecedent unto that of power and might. They place that in the very summitude of all that excellency, which they ascribe to the Divine Being. And so when God himself will expressly tell us his name, the Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; though he will in no wise clear the guilty—a thing most consistent with the most excellent goodness; for that goodness were fatuity, were stolidity, that were unaccompanied with such a severity, that were unexpressive of it. So he speaks of himself, who best knows his own nature, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, 8. And the Scripture is full of it elsewhere. That there is such a natural notion as this generally obtaining in the minds of men, is above all demonstration,—that it cannot but be so, that it must be so; for what is universal, must proceed from a universal cause; but there is no universal cause, but God alone. And then,

2. This good will of God towards men, is to be further argued from his continuing of man (though apostate, though revolted from him) in possession of those original excellencies of his nature, that were most essential to it, through the several successions of time so long. That is, as to such excellencies as are essential to the nature of man, these he is pleased to continue man in the possession of from age to age, and from generation to generation, though he be a revolted apostate creature. He might have transformed him into another thing. Men might have produced monsters from one generation to another, and that as a mark of divine severity, for that once they did apostatize. Into what a horrid thing might man have been turned upon the first transgression; and so this habitable world be inhabited only by creatures that should be terrors to themselves, and one to another!

It may be said, that they are turned into worse than monsters by sin; and it is very true, they are so. But that is their own production, and not God's; so they have made themselves, that is true: they are in a moral sense monsters; but so they are their miscreants; they might have been so in a natural sense, and that could have been no injury or reflection upon the Author of their nature. Merely natural evil is justly punitive of, and doth animadvert upon, that which is moral.

But that it is not so; that man should be still, as to his naturals, the same intelligent creature that he was; that he should from age to age appear upon the stage of this earth, with a mind and understanding capable of comprehending so great things; that this understanding power should be so many ways improvable; that the soul to which it belongs should be so commodiously lodged in a tabernacle so curiously wrought by divine art, with God's own hand, and all the parts and members thereof written in his book: a contemplation that put the Psalmist into a transport, "Fearfully and wonderfully was I made, and that my soul knoweth right well. And how precious are thy thoughts to me, O God!" They were these thoughts that he was reflecting on, concerning the very frame, and make, and nature of man, in that 139th Psalm, and which he considers in so high a rapture of spirit.

We are encompassed with wonders, and we take no notice of them; that such creatures as we should spring up in a succession, a noble sort of creatures, God-like—bearing the natural image of God upon us. Thus it is with man; though revolted, yet God lets him live upon this earth, and propagate, and continue his kind. Let him (saith he) wear my image, to put him in mind, and that they may put one another in mind, whence they were, and who was the original of life and being to him, and of that nature which they have: a strange indulgence, and a most emphatical argument of the divine benignity, that he will let such creatures go up and down in this world, with his image upon them, though they have fallen from him, and are universally engaged in a war and hostility against him!

You have heard, heretofore, (and I hope generally have not forgotten, at least cannot be ignorant,) of the necessary distinction of the natural image of God and the moral. And this is the wonder, that where the moral image of God is gone, men have put it away and blotted it out, that yet the natural remains. And God lets it be so, and let such a sort of creatures still descend, and possess, and inhabit this world; minds, spirits, so commodiously lodged in so aptly figured tabernacles of flesh, where they have so many organs for the use and improvement of the reasonable and immortal mind, that is put into those tabernacles as the inhabitant; by which it can exercise sense, and take in all the light, and lustre, and glory of this world, and enjoy the sensitive objects wherewith it is so variously replenished. A continual argument of God's benignity and good will towards men; but especially that he continues him an intelligent understanding creature upon this earth. A thing that pagans have been apprehensive of with gratitude; and it is a shame that we should not consider it more. It is that which history hath transmitted to us, concerning that noble pagan, Plato, that when he lay a dying, he solemnly gave God thanks that he had made him a man, and not a beast; and that he had made him a Grecian, and not a barbarian; and that he had made him to live in the time

wherein Socrates lived, who was so great a luminary in his time.

But how great things have we to recount as additional to the human nature. The human nature itself is that which I am now principally pointing at, as an argument to us of God's good will towards men, that he lets men continue, as to their natural being, what they were through so many ages wherein they have been in an apostacy from him, and rebellion against him; especially when we consider that it is improvable; for religion hath its ground, its foundation in humanity, in the human nature; otherwise, a brute or a stone might be a capable subject of religion. But inasmuch as God doth continue the human nature, and make that descend, he doth thereby continue capable subjects of religion, and capable subjects of blessedness; since religion and felicity are the two most connatural things to one another in all the world. And thus Scripture doth also teach us to recount with ourselves; to consider, to deduce, and make our collections from it; when it tells us of the spirit that is in man, and that the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding, to make him wiser than the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field. And when we are elsewhere told that the spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching into the inward parts of the belly; to wit, into the most abstruse and hidden things, those that are most recondite within a man's self. And, again,

3. This is a further argument of God's good will towards men generally considered, that they are taught and prompted even by nature itself, to consider and look upon God as some way related to them; to look upon him as, upon a natural account, a father to them. For this is a true account. It is true, also, that there is a more special notion under which he is so to some, as we shall have occasion hereafter to show; but he is so in a common notion too. So natural light hath taught men to account and reckon when they have spoken of God as the paternal mind. They have considered themselves as all having minds, and they have conceived of the divine mind as the paternal mind, the Father of all those minds. They have spoken of themselves as God's offspring, and you see the scripture quotes that from one of their writers, and approves and justifies the notion, Acts xvii. 28. "We are all his offspring, as one of your own poets hath affirmed." The thing is true, (saith he,) your own poets have spoken thus concerning men, that they are the offspring of God: and they have apprehended the matter aright; they are so, he is upon a natural account a Father to them: as Adam is said to be the son of God on the same account.

And it is a conception that carries a gleam of light with it, that God should style himself the Father of spirits, but more particularly the God of the spirits of all flesh, as in that Numbers xxvii. 16. It is true, that he is in a more particular way and sense the God of some. But they are his own words, to call himself also the God of all, of all spirits that inhabit and dwell in flesh. He doth not call himself the God of another sort of spirits, that inhabit not flesh, that have sinned against him, that are apostate spirits; (as the spirits of men also are;) but he calls himself the God of the spirits of all flesh, implying, that he hath not universally abandoned the spirits of men. As if he should have said, "I do not renounce, I do not quit all claim to them, I have affairs to transact with them, as I have not with those other spirits, that are thrown out of my sight, and bound up in chains of darkness, and reserved to the judgment of the great day;" as I shall have occasion more directly to speak, when I come to speak of God's good will to men, considered comparatively with the course of his dispensation towards that other order of apostate creatures. And,

4. The constant exercise of God's patience is a great argument of his good will towards men. This is that whereof they not only have a notion in their minds, comprehended and included in that common notion of his benignity and goodness, but they have experience of it in fact; and it is from that I am now arguing: and it is a mighty cogent and convictive argument of God's good will, if it be but considered what men have to argue from, in reference hereunto, especially these two topics, their own guilt and God's power.

Their own guilt; whereof, since man hath been a sinner, he hath had some natural conscience of guilt always accompanying him. And more or less men have consciences accusing and excusing, by turns, as the matter lies in view before us, Romans ii. 15. Now let recourse be had to that topic of men's own guiltiness, that hath deserved ill at the hands of God; this is a common notion with men. Many of your heathens, though they do not know how the apostacy came about, have generally granted that man was in a state of apostacy; that he is not in the state that he was at first made in, but in a degenerate sinful state; and it is spoken of as a thing common to men, what I noted to you but now, out of Romans ii. 15. that they carry accusing consciences about with them. I say, then, do but consider that topic, and from hence go to the other, that of the divine power: and nothing is more obvious to men, (if they will use their thoughts,) than to consider this, that he that made such a world as this, can easily right himself upon such creatures as we are in a moment, at his pleasure. Then lay but these two things together, (which are obvious to common apprehension,) that we are guilty creatures, and he is omnipotent God; we have deserved that he should severely animadvert upon us, and he can do it at pleasure; hath it in his power to do it when he will; and yet we are spared. What doth all this signify, but a continual miracle of divine patience? And what is that to be resolved into, but divine goodness? "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance?"

When we argue from hence to persuade sinners to turn unto God, do we argue from a feigned thing? Is it not a great reality from which we are thus directed to argue, when the Scripture itself gives us the direction? It teaches men so to consider the matter themselves, as in that 2 Peter iii. 9, 10. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but he is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish; but that they may come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved." And we are to account the long-suffering of the Lord salvation. What doth he bear with an offending creature for, in so continued a course, when he hath so many advantages against him so many thunderbolts in command at a moment? Why doth he spare, when the creature is guilty, and he is mighty? And yet he spares: what judgment is to be made of all this? Why, the apostle tells you: Count the long-suffering of the Lord salvation; to wit, that he doth use this method as an apt medium, as a proper means to bring men to consider: and if they will not consider, they are loading themselves with guilt; so much the more, when they will not consider what is so obvious, what lies so much in view before them. And I might add, again, this further argument from,

5. The common exercise of God's bounty towards the children of men; that is, that he doth not only spare, but sustain them; not only withhold and keep off from them destructive evils, but supply them needful good things. That he should preserve this world in so much consistency, for the use and entertainment of offending and rebellious creatures, those that seldom or never take notice of him, and rarely ever give him thanks. That this earth should be so strangely fertile, through all the successions of time, and productive of so delicious things, so pleasant things; not only such things as are necessary for the support of human life, but such things as are delectable too, yielding a pleasing entertainment to man during his residence and abode here. Oh, the riches of the divine goodness towards apostate, degenerate, fallen creatures! These very things have a ducture, a leadingness with them. When God doth immediately please and gratify sense, there is an aptitude in this to instruct minds to reach the understandings of men, to oblige and prompt men to consider whence all this is, and upon what terms, and for what ends and purposes.

There are divers other things congenerous to these, which I cannot go through with now, as the continual care that he takes of men's lives, that he hath put a self-preserving principle into men. It is true, that is natural, but how came it to be so? It is from the Author of all nature, he could have made (if he had pleased) the contrary as natu-

ral; that he hath prompted men to live in societies for common mutual defence; that he hath so severely threatened the sin of homicide, of killing or destroying a man; and for that very reason, because he bears his image. "This creature of mine I will not have touched, for he carries my image upon him: I will not have any violence offered to my image." That he did take so particular a care even of that wicked Cain himself; put his mark upon him, lest any finding him should slay him. It speaks a strange tendency of man, (though now an apostate,) that there is a peculiar sacredness put upon the life of man, beyond all other creatures that do inhabit this earth; because this is an improvable life; this is a thing that may be grafted upon; noble grafts may be inserted here into a human life; therefore, that I will have counted precious, and preserved as such; so as, that if any man shall make a breach upon the human life, he shall break through my law, which I set as a boundary and guard, to preserve so valuable and so precious a thing.

And then he takes such care for the keeping up of common order in this world, that he hath appointed magistracy, government, and laws, in order hereunto, that all may not run into confusion. They must break his laws before they can break one another's peace; that he hath obliged men to the mutual love of one another, wherein, if it were observed and complied with, what a calm, peaceful region would this world be! So that men might have an opportunity to consider, at leisure, the greater concernments of another world. He hath, as to this, done several things most highly becoming the goodness and benignity of a God towards such creatures as we were become.

And then the obligation that he holds men under unto natural religion, and the several exercises of it. Here is a mighty demonstration of his good will towards men, that he will not dispense with them as to this thing; but as common as human nature is, so common is his law running in that nature, obliging men to some religion or other; in general to be religious, obliging them unto the several principles and duties of natural religion; to trust in God, and to love him as their supreme good, with all their heart, and soul, and might, and mind, which is a natural law; to pray to him, to praise him, and give him thanks. And that, whereas he is pleased to have a house, a dwelling here on earth, that house is called the house of prayer to all nations, and he will have all flesh come to him; and complains that they do not come to him, *nor will come.* When looking down upon the children of men, to see who inquires and seeks after God, he finds all gone out of the way, that they will not do this; that they will not say, Where is God my Maker? This he complains of.

All this carries a mighty argument in it, that there is still a good will in heaven towards men on earth, as neglectful of God and themselves as the children of men are generally become. And it is necessary that men should understand, and now that when they are charged, when God doth so highly charge them with sinning against his goodness, it is not a nullity that they are charged to offend against, in all their neglects of God: and, in justice to him, we are obliged to heighten and magnify his goodness to men; that so such as will never be won and overcome by this goodness of his, may be so much the more glorious trophies to that justice which will vindicate the wrong upon them at last.

THE END.

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